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CONTENTS

OF VOL. IV.

RAINBOW GOLD.

	PAGE
Prologue	1

BOOK I.—HOW HERCULE ASMODÉE BONAVENTURE ENLISTED JOB ROUND.

Chapter I.	2
„ II.	10
„ III.	25
„ IV.	113
„ V.	123
„ VI.	134

BOOK II.—HOW JOB ROUND BEGAN HIS REPENTANCE.

Chapter I.	225
„ II.	234
„ III.	244
„ IV.	421
„ V.	430
„ VI.	438

BOOK III.—HOW JOHN SMITH AND JOB ROUND GREW TO BE ONE AND THE SAME FOR GENERAL CONINGHAME.

Chapter I.	529
„ II.	540
„ III.	555
„ IV.	636
„ V.	645
„ VI.	657

THE TALK OF THE TOWN. (*Illustrated by H. Furniss.*)

			PAGE
Chapter	XXVII.	A Royal Patron	81
„	XXVIII.	The Green-eyed Monster	89
„	XXIX.	The Cypher	97
„	XXX.	The Play	103
„	XXXI.	The Messenger of Disgrace	194
„	XXXII.	The Feet of Clay	201
„	XXXIII.	Breaking it	207
„	XXXIV.	A Comforter	213
„	XXXV.	Farewell	219

COURT ROYAL. (*Illustrated by G. du Maurier.*)

Chapter	I.	A Little Devil	337
„	II.	Pawned	346
„	III.	Lazarus	353
„	IV.	Joanna's School	358
„	V.	Crudge, Solicitor	449
„	VI.	The Ducal Family	458
„	VII.	Beavis	471
„	VIII.	The Marquess	481
„	IX.	Lord Ronald	561
„	X.	The Fifth of November	569
„	XI.	Who was Rachel?	581
„	XII.	Charlie Cheek	588

At Scutari	325
A Very Old Master	254
'Baie des Trépassés,' By the (*Illustrated by W. Small*)	604
Big Animals	405
Buddhist Monasteries, Recollections of	267
Carnegies, The Two (*Illustrated by Towneley Green*)	292
Charles Dickens at Home	32
Daisycliffe Mystery, The (*Illustrated by M. Fitzgerald*)	163
De Banana	182

PAGE
Experts in Handwriting 148

Fire Brigade, The 366
Foo-Chow, Reminiscences of 52

Garden Party, Mrs. Wilmington's (*Illustrated by T. S. Cheeseman*) . 386
Go to the Ant 68

Humours of Parliamentary Elections, The 488
Handwriting, Experts in 148

Leeches 326

Master, A Very Old 254
Mrs. Wilmington's Garden Party (*Illustrated by T. S. Cheeseman*) 386
Mystery, The Daisycliffe (*Illustrated by M. Fitzgerald*) 163

Next-of-Kin Agencies 619
No. 11 Welham Square (*Illustrated by G. du Maurier*) 505

Old Master, A Very 254

Parliamentary Elections, The Humours of 488
Photography, The Rise and Progress of 519
Present, the Rabbi's 420

Recollections of Buddhist Monasteries 267
Reminiscences of Foo-Chow 52
Rise and Progress of Photography, The 519
Round About Haida 596

Scutari, At 325

The Daisycliffe Mystery (*Illustrated by M. Fitzgerald*) 163
The Fire Brigade 366
The Humours of Parliamentary Elections 488
The Rabbi's Present 420
The Rise and Progress of Photography 519
The Two Carnegies (*Illustrated by Towneley Green*) 292

THE

CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JANUARY, 1885.

RAINBOW GOLD.

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

PROLOGUE.

A HUNCHBACKED dwarf, waiting in Fleet Street for the clock to strike, looked in at a pawnbroker's shop window. It was night-time, and the street was filled with flaring lights and dismal shadows. The rain plashed mournfully, and oily tears, within and without, smeared the glass of the window panes. The hunchback's battered hat and seedy cloak were agleam with rain, and he shivered as he looked at the window. He was a sorrowful figure, and had a sorrowful story if anybody had cared to hear it. His expression was one of starven misfortune and servitude to fate, but he wore a look of pathetic dignity which no creature with a heart could have insulted.

He was hungry and lonely, and had scarce heart left in him for anything, when he turned to while away a minute in rainy Fleet Street, and looked, as if by chance, at a pawnbroker's window. And lo! he was wet and hungry, and despised and poor, no longer, and no longer aweary of the world. There awoke within him the most extravagant soul of hope, the tenderest memories, and the most passionate singleness of purpose.

All this chaos of emotion opened in his heart at the mere sight of a medal which hung in the pawnbroker's window. The medal bore a ticket, and on the ticket was inscribed: 'Eastern Curio. Guinea Gold. With Inscription. Only £2. 5*s*.'

BOOK I.

HOW HERCULE ASMODÉE BONAVENTURE ENLISTED JOB ROUND.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Ezekiel Round stood at his door on a summer day, seeing nothing, thinking of nothing, and smoking. He was a man with a well-filled waistcoat (it comes natural to mention his waistcoat first), a red face, clean shaven, fiery hair, and an expression of habitual aggravation. His shoes were big and heavy, and looked self-willed. So did his legs and his shoulders; and his red fists hung at his sides with an air of sulky pugnacity at rest.

Mr. Round's long churchwarden depended from his lips, and the bowl lay upon his red plush waistcoat near the flapped pocket on the right-hand side. From beneath his waistcoat trailed a big silver chain with a handful of seals attached to it. His small-clothes were of fine corduroy, and his stockings of grey worsted; he wore no coat, and his opinionated shirt-collars rose to his ears. He was short, but broad, and so rounded with good living that when you viewed him sideways the lower button of his waistcoat showed a foot in front of his pragmatical double chin. Behind Mr. Round, on the top of the steps which led to the doorway, sat a bulldog with pink eyes, who licked his jaws in the vain relish of fancy, and winked covetously at his master's calves.

When Mr. Round had stood for half an hour or so in the afternoon sunshine, bullying the opposite houses with his inflammatory waistcoat, a slight grey man came along the road and passed him with a salutation.

'Good afternoon, Round.'

'Afternoon, Armstrong.'

'Fine weather for the crops.'

'Might be wuss,' said Ezekiel; 'might be better.' The grey man walked on a step or two in pursuance of his business, and Ezekiel knocked the ashes from his pipe. 'Armstrong.' The grey man turned and retraced his steps. 'Give me a word, Armstrong!'

'Certainly. What is it?'

'That lad of mine,' said Mr. Round, touching the grey man on the shoulder with the tip of his pipe-stem. The other looked up at him with absent-minded eyes. 'That gell o' yourn.'

'Girl of mine?' asked Armstrong. 'What girl of mine?' He was alert and upright in a minute, and his quick Scottish speech contrasted sharply with Ezekiel's slow Black Country drawl.

'Now, don't you be peppery wi' me, Armstrong. Theer's no cause nor rayson to be peppery. A civil answer to a civil question is what might be looked for in a man like you.'

The grey man smiled dryly, and yet with a certain sweetness of humour. 'Ask your civil question.'

'That lad o' mine, and that gell o' yourn. What's between 'em?'

'You and I are between them,' said Armstrong.

'Eh?' returned Ezekiel, staring at him. 'I'm told as Job is continual to be found a-mouching round your house.'

'And you don't like that?'

'No. I don't like it. And what's more, I put my foot on it.'

'Very good,' said the Scot. 'It's a pleasant thing for neighbours to dwell together in unity. I put my foot on it also.'

'Poverty's no sin, so far as ever I heerd,' said Ezekiel, chinking the money in his pocket, 'and wealth's no virtue—maybe. But what I say is, "Every man to his position in life to which it may please God to call him." If Job behaves himself theer's a tidy penny for him. If he crosses his father, and marries, so to speak, below him, I shake the dust off of my feet agen him, and he is no more worthy to be called my son.'

'There's a forbear of yours alluded to in Shakespeare, my friend,' returned the grey man, 'as being able to quote Scripture for his purpose. I'm glad to see the old family characteristics reviving. I make out that you desire to put an end to the lad's visits at my house.'

'That's my wish,' said Ezekiel, decisively. 'If he marries apart from my will, he won't get a penny o' *my* money. Mind that now. Not a penny.'

'My good man,' said the other, quietly, 'you think just a trifle too much of your money. There's nobody wants your money. There's just other two or three things in the world worth thinking of. If the lad calls again I'll tell him it's against your will, and that I can't allow it. Good afternoon.'

'Hold on,' said Ezekiel. 'You can tell him now. Here he is—a-coming down the street this very minute.'

'You can tell him not to call,' answered Armstrong; 'and if

he calls in spite of that, I'll tell him that I can't have him at my house. More's the pity, for I like the lad.'

Mr. Round raised his voice and bellowed 'Job.' The youngster waved his hand in reply, and came swaggering down the street with a quickened step. He was a trifle over six feet in height, and remarkably broad-shouldered for two-and-twenty. He was clean-shaven, after the manner of the time. He wore straps to his trousers; his coat-collar had a great roll to it; his hat was bell-topped and much curled at the brim. Under one arm he carried a slender tasselled cane, and in one hand he flourished a pair of gloves. Altogether he looked like a buck of the first order—*i.e.* for Castle Barfield, where the splendours of town could hardly be expected to find a perfect reproduction. He was a handsome fellow into the bargain, with fine grey eyes, a biggish nose, curly red hair, thickset eyebrows many shades darker, and mouth and chin a thought too hard for his years. He carried his head well up, and swaggered in his gait, not offensively, but out of strength and elasticity and high spirits.

'Well, Mr. Armstrong,' cried this new comer, when within a dozen yards. 'How are you? What about the new gambit?'

'Useless,' said the grey man. 'Bishop to king's knight's fifth, and the game's over.'

'D'ye think so?' asked the youngster, laughing. 'I'll come down to-night and try that.'

'Will you?' said his father, in a jeering growl. The lad looked at him swiftly, and then looked at Armstrong.

'Hillo!' he cried; 'what's wrong here?'

'Speak your mind, Armstrong,' said Ezekiel.

'I haven't a mind in the matter,' returned Armstrong, dryly. 'Speak your mind for yourself, my man.'

'Very well, then,' said Ezekiel. 'Here's my mind, Job. I want you to stop them goings on of yours at Armstrong's.'

'Goings on?' asked Job. 'What goings on?'

'I am fairly well beknown,' said his father, 'to be a man as says a thing and sticks to it.' Ezekiel was not young or handsome as his son was, but the two were curiously alike as they stood facing each other.

'That's a fine principle—on one condition,' said Armstrong, placidly. 'But ye need a heap o' warldly wisdom and heavenly guidance with it. What d'ye do when you find you've said the wrong thing?'

'What I say I stick to,' repeated Ezekiel, without paying much heed to this inquiry. 'You stop them goings on at Armstrong's.'

'What goings on?' asked Job a second time.

'I've nothin' to say agen Armstrong,' said Ezekiel, with a tolerant wave of his pipe; 'and nothin' to say agen his gells. But endure them goings on I will not. Nayther will Armstrong.'

'Speak a little plainer, if you please, father,' said Job. For so young a man he had a remarkably deep voice, and he was so tall that though his father stood upon the bottom step of the little flight of three which led to the doorway, he could still look down upon him.

'I am a man,' returned his father, 'as will nayther give an offence nor tek one. Therefore, I say afore William Armstrong's face what I'd say behind his back—which is this—his gells is no match for a lad o' mine.'

The lad's face had that pallor which so often accompanies red hair, and a slight blush showed readily. He flushed scarlet now, with mingled shame and anger, and almost in the same instant turned on Armstrong with a look and gesture of apology.

'I could answer that,' he said, 'from any other man in the world, sir. But since my father says it, I can only be ashamed of it.'

'From his own p'int of view, my lad,' answered Armstrong, 'your father's right. And since he takes that p'int of view, it's the duty of a good son to obey him.'

'I didn't expect you to side against me,' said the lad.

'Ma dearr boy,' returned the Scot, 'I'm not siding against you. I'm an independent observer. Just that, and nothing more. "Honour thy father, that thy days may be long in the land."'

'Armstrong's a man o' sense,' said Ezekiel, doggedly. 'He knows what's good for you, and he knows his own place, Armstrong does.'

'My man,' said Armstrong, as placidly as before, 'a fool's praise is sorer to bear than a wise man's blame. From your p'int of view, I'm more ignorant of my place than you'd guess me to be if you spent a month in trying.'

Ezekiel could not understand this all at once, and the northerner's inoffensive gaze and quiet speech disarmed him. The grey

man's eyes had a smile in them, not of insolence or satire or triumph, but of pure humour. Yet he was rather a wistful-looking grey man, too. His clothes were shrunken and his figure was bowed, and his face was familiar with the mingled expression of pain and patience.

'That's as maybe,' returned Ezekiel, guardedly. 'But i' the meanwhile, Job, you can mek out my meaning. About that, theer is no manner of a doubt. And Armstrong is of a mind wi' me. Them goings on must end.'

Armstrong put out a hand towards Job, and that stalwart youngster took it with an appealing glance. The grey man shook hands and walked away. Job and Ezekiel looked after him, and the bulldog yawned luxuriously, as though the going of a comparative stranger had been a relief to him, and he could relax from company manners.

'Come in, Job,' said the elder man, after a pause. 'I've got a thing or two to say to thee.' He led the way, and Job followed. A big fire, half obscured by ashes, slumbered in the wide high-shouldered grate in the kitchen, and a kettle was suspended by two or three pot-hooks from a crane above it. Ezekiel filled his pipe from a leaden coffin of a tobacco-box, and stuck the bowl amidst the coals to get a light. The kitchen clock ticked harshly with a dictatorial tone like its owner's. There was nothing in the room with which Job had not been familiar from childhood, but he saw everything anew, and as if for the first time. He noticed then, and remembered afterwards, a crack in the ash-preventer below the fire-grate, and the grain of the woodwork where the paint had been rubbed away from the pillars which supported the high mantelshelf. He traced with the point of his walking-cane the outline of a greyhound on the cast-iron door of the oven, and discovered its absurd want of proportion.

'You have something to say to me, father?' he said, after a longish pause.

'A thing or two,' returned Ezekiel. 'One or two things.' The tick of the clock repeated 'one or—two things' a score of times before either of them spoke again.

'Say them, if you please.'

'You are,' said Ezekiel, pulling at his pipe, and speaking with great deliberation, 'I reckon, the obstin*a*test and pigheadedest young feller in Castle Barfield.'

Job, with the point of his cane at the greyhound's nose, turned

to look at his father. His lips were tight set, and his reddish-brown eyebrows knit themselves gloomily.

'Tek your hat off,' said Ezekiel.

Job obeyed, and, holding the hat in his left hand, went on tracing the greyhound's outline.

'Obstinate and pig-headed is your name and nature,' pursued Ezekiel.

The lad laughed, and his gleam of mirth, though momentary, was real.

'Go on,' he said gloomily a second later.

'I will go on,' returned Mr. Round, 'or I will not go on, accordin' as I please or displease, and not accordin' to any jackanapes's biddin'.' He kept silence for perhaps a minute, and so far mollified himself by this act of aggravation that he could speak again: 'Pig-headed,' he observed, 'ain't the name for you.' Job bent closer over the blackleaded greyhound and said nothing. 'J'ear what I'm a-sayin'?' Ezekiel demanded.

'Distinctly,' answered Job.

'Now you mind *me*,' cried his father, shaking the pipe-stem at him as if it were a stick. 'I'm a man of his word—and that you'll find. If I ever ketch you a-mouching round Armstrong's house again, I've done with you.'

'Very well,' said Job, with mischief in the tone.

'If I ever ketch you with Armstrong's gell,' resumed Ezekiel, 'or hear talk o' you and Armstrong's gell a-bein' together, I've done with you.'

'Very well,' said Job.

'If you like to wed thirst to hunger, goo an' do it,' cried Ezekiel. 'But if you move beyand my words I've done with you, and you'll never see a penny o' my money.'

'Very well,' said Job, a third time.

'You've got my mind now, plain and straightforrad,' said the old man, 'and you're theer to do what pleases you. I've got no more to say.'

'Then,' returned Job, with unfilial dryness, 'I can speak without fear of interrupting you. Money isn't everything in the world, and I don't want your money. I don't want to quarrel either. I don't think you're a very sensible man, father, or you'd know better than threaten me. You never found that pay, not even when I was a little chap and you used to thrash me. I don't want to quarrel. I should like to part friends. But I shall never

change my mind or let my will break down for all the money in the world.' Ezekiel glared at him, too much enraged and astonished to say a word as yet. 'I wish to God,' said the lad, 'that you were poor. I'd work my fingers to the bone to keep you, and to let you want for nothing. But now you hold your money over me like a whip. What would you think of me if I went down on my knees to you every time you threaten me? I could never bear to look at my own face in the glass again. I could never hold my head up in the street. Keep your money. Leave it where you like.'

It was in his mind and heart to say friendlier things than this, as the wet flash of his eyes declared. But it was not in his nature to be tender on the surface, and his voice was more defiant and less friendly than his heart. Ezekiel answered him with dogged passion:

'Mek your bed—mek your bed—and lie on it. For so you shall.'

'Leave your money where you like, father,' the lad said more gently; 'but let you and me be friends.'

'Wheer my money goes,' said Ezekiel, 'my liking goes. Mek your ch'ice, Job—here in this kitchen, now, this very minute. Mek your ch'ice betwixt William Armstrong's gell an' your own father.'

'I don't want to part,' answered the lad; 'I don't want to quarrel. You will be as sorry for this as I shall.'

'Are you a-setting-up to talk equal with your father?' Ezekiel asked. 'Things is come to a pass, to be sure, when that happens. Mek your ch'ice, Job, this minute. If ever you speak to that gell again I disown you.'

'Good-bye, dad,' said Job, reaching out a hand to him. 'You may live my enemy if you like; but I'll part friendly.'

'Mek your bed,' the old man quavered fiercely; 'mek your bed, and lie on it.'

'You've settled that for me,' his son replied. 'I'm not for sale at the price you want to pay for me. There's no use in wasting words about it, father.'

'You're a defying me,' cried Ezekiel, 'are you? What! *you*—a defying ME? Get outside my doors.'

'Take time to think over that, father. If I leave the house at your bidding now, I shall never come back into it.'

Ezekiel went at him storming, with curses, and the youngster, putting on his hat, walked out of the house and into the street.

Mr. Round, with the bulldog behind him, followed and raged from the doorstep. At the sound of his voice neighbours came to doors and windows, and the few passengers in the street paused in amazement. Job marched away with his gloves in one hand and his walking-cane in the other. The jaunty swagger of half an hour ago was gone, and he walked like a man bent on serious business.

How much the bulldog knew of the rights and wrongs of the case no man may tell. He looked uncertainly from his master to the retreating figure of his master's son. For a second or two he actually whimpered in his indecision, but all on a sudden he made up his mind, and tore down the street in pursuit of Job. The young fellow with raised stick ordered him home, and Ezekiel shouted at him from the doorsteps. But the brute, having made his mind up, was neither to be cajoled nor threatened. He waited until Job had turned again, and then he followed.

'Go wheer you like,' shouted Ezekiel, advancing into the middle of the roadway to be heard the better. 'Live wheer you like. Starve wheer you like. Niver darken my doors again!'

The upper end of Castle Barfield High Street heard this and wondered. It had been pretty well known that a growing coldness existed between father and son, but nobody had expected the family frost to flash into such flame as this, though the family volcano is popularly known to brood below an icy surface. Job heard his father's voice, and walked on steadily a little straighter than before. The bulldog paddled silently behind him, looking from side to side as if he knew that this was a leavetaking with familiar things.

Ezekiel re-entered the house and slammed the door behind him. Job heard the sound, and knew its meaning. It seemed to snap his life in two. The past was all dead and done with, and the new life began at that second.

The bulldog ran alongside and looked up at him appealingly.

'Do you want to stick to me, Pincher?' asked Job, looking down at him. If ever an attitude answered a question, Pincher said 'Yes.' 'Come along, then,' said the lad, stooping to pat him. 'I bred you from a pup, and you have a right to stick to me. We'll face the world together, Pincher. There's a bit of Bite and Hold Fast in the pair of us, and I daresay we shall get along together very nicely.'

Pincher wagged his hindquarters—he was crop-tailed and

limited as to expression—and the two went on together. The lad's underjaw projected a little when he was angry or resolved, and Pincher, as he ran alongside the newly-made adventurer, looked like a humble relative.

CHAPTER II.

At the lower end of Castle Barfield High Street, with but one or two houses between it and the Park wall, stood a house of two stories. Above the white-curtained domestic upper windows was painted in blistered and sun-faded letters the legend 'The Stanhope Press.' Below the domestic windows and above the business window the name of 'William Armstrong' went the way of all paint towards final obliteration. There were twenty-one panes of glass in the business window, seven from left to right, and three from top to bottom, and the central pane was illuminated with a device which announced the sale of all patented and family medicines within. When a customer entered at the low-browed shop-door, a cracked bell, hung upon a circular spring, rankled behind him until he had made his purchase and gone out again, when the closing of the door set it going anew. Books no man in Castle Barfield bought, or desired to buy, grew mildewed on the shelves. Adam Smith was there, and Baxter kept him in dull company. The Works of Sir R. Steele, Now First Collected, might have claimed a more cheerful tomb than this, and The Dramatists of the Seventeenth Century, in thirteen volumes, looked as neglected and forlorn as the strictest moralist could wish them. Various sorts of printing papers, most of them in sad confusion, were piled high upon a back counter, and untidy packets of stationery ware, quill-pens with dusty feathers, cobwebbed ink-bottles, and what not, filled up the shelves which were unoccupied with books.

The place had an unprosperous look, and the grey man sitting behind the counter was at least in partial keeping with his surroundings. A casual onlooker could not be supposed to know it, but his head was lined with the contents of the books which lined his untidy shelves. His grey hair and bits of grey side-whisker, and his shrunken clothes of undecided colour, were at one with the faded and unhopeful place. On the littered shelf behind him lay a book of chess, and his hand was stretched out backwards to hold the page open. The fingers of his disengaged hand drummed

busily on his knee, and he half whistled in tuneless time to that accompaniment.

The shop-door, which always stuck a little and jarred on opening, was thrust back by a strong hand, and the shrill clatter of the bell awoke him from his study.

'Job, my lad,' he said rising. 'This is a very unwise defiance of authority. Let me serve you with something—a bundle of quills?—a bottle of writing-fluid?'

Job laid his hand upon the clattering bell and silenced it.

'It's all over between me and my father, sir, and I want to say something to you in private, if you please.'

'We're as private here,' said Armstrong, with a droll glance about the place, 'as we should be in the Desert of Sahara.'

'More's the pity, sir,' answered Job. 'You ought to do a better trade if the people about here weren't such idiots. But it isn't that I came to speak about. I have left home, sir.'

Armstrong shook his head mournfully. 'Eh, dear, dear!' he said; 'the folly of the world is just incurable. Ye haven't time to bury the old fool before the young one 's flourishing.'

'Well, sir,' said Job, shifting one or two odds and ends on the counter as he spoke, 'I can't take the responsibility for this. My father put an alternative before me, Mr. Armstrong. He told me that I was never to enter your house again, or I must leave his. I haven't quarrelled with him. I don't believe I've said one bitter word to him. I said "Good-bye," that was all, and he cursed me a little way down the street—like a father.'

'Job, my lad,' said the grey shopkeeper, with mournful earnestness, 'pocket your pride, and go home again.'

'It's of no use to talk about that, sir,' returned Job, firmly. 'I'm not a runaway. I'm not a wastrel. I think if I set myself to do it that I can make a living somehow. *You* won't think the worse of me, sir, because I couldn't make a dishonourable bargain?'

'Listen to me, Job, my lad,' said Armstrong. 'I thought until this afternoon, when your father spoke to me, that I was playing Gamaliel to your Paul, and that I was just forming your mind and your manners, and fitting you to fight the world and the flesh and the devil. Now I wake up, and I find that you're no more Paul than I am—ardent for knowledge—but just a Strephon sighing for a maid; and I'm no Gamaliel in a chair of authority, but just an old fool of a father in a chimney-corner. Now, listen

to me. I never guessed the truth until an hour ago. When I came home I spoke to Mistress Armstrong—the vera pearl of candour—and she tells me I'm an ass or I'd have seen it a year ago. Now, Job, I did *not* see it, and the first glimpse I ever had of it came from your father this afternoon. If I had seen it I should have put an end to it. Listen to me. It's not that I don't like you, and it's not that I think you'd make anything but a good husband when you grow up to be old enough to be thinking of such gauds as marriage. Listen to me. I'm not without pride in my own way, and it's just clean outside my powers o' fancy that I should let a girl o' mine marry into a household where her poverty would be despised. Now there's no man in Europe who despises poverty as your father does. He knows one earthly thing of value, and only one. That's money, or money's worth.'

'Well, sir,' said Job, 'all that might have been very true yesterday or this morning; but there's no money in the way now.' He threw his hands abroad with a half-embarrassed laugh. 'What I have to do now is to go out into the world and make a living. I'm as poor, sir, as even you would desire a son-in-law to be.'

'What's the amount of your father's fortune?' asked Armstrong.

'I don't know, sir,' said Job. 'He never told me, and I never asked him.'

'Well, it's said to be ten thousand pounds.'

'I dare say,' Job responded. 'Don't let that trouble you, sir. I shall never touch a penny of it, now.'

'That's a rare hatful of money, Job, my lad,' said Armstrong. 'There's no woman in the world that's worth it. If she were the loveliest of her sex, and the wisest and worthiest, there would be a thousand so near her perfections, d'ye see, that you might spend a lifetime and find no difference in their value. Man, there's not a street in England that hasn't a good woman in it. They're just as plenty as blackberries, and nearly as like one another. No man need be lonely for want of a good woman to marry him—not if he were a fool, or a Gorgon, or a cripple. A good woman has every virtue under the sun except discernment, and she's ready to love anybody that thinks her an inch or two over the ordinar. But all this is barren philosophy to you, lad. Here's the plain moral of it. Put your pride in your pocket. Go home and make peace with your father. Fall in love judiciously; marry in your own station; close the old man's eyes when his

time comes, and give thanks when you do it that you knew one sensible man who gave you the benefit of his own wisdom and experience.'

'You're more cruel than you mean to be, Mr. Armstrong,' said Job. 'I have parted with my father, sir, and there is nothing in the world which can bring us together again. He ordered me from the house, and he cursed me from the door. I don't ask anything more than this,' he hurried on: 'let me find employment, and when I have found, it let me see Grace now and then until I am in a position to offer her a home.'

'Job Round,' said Armstrong, 'listen to me. I'll have neither part nor lot in the division of father and son. I'll be no instrument to hold father and son asunder. I like you too well to be your enemy. There'll be a reconciliation in a day or two, or a week or two, if the oreeginal *casus belli* doesn't continue to stand between you.'

'No, sir,' cried the youngster, 'there's no reconciliation possible.'

'Hoots, man!' said Armstrong, calmly. 'Who are you for a judge o' possibilities? You're one in the quarrel, and you're blinded with your own ire.'

Job gave an impatient groan. 'Do try to understand me, Mr. Armstrong. I have thrown up everything to come and ask you this one thing. What should take me back to my father? Respect? He deserves none. Affection? He never gave me a chance to have any. His money? Not if he were richer than Crœsus!'

'Now, lad, lad,' said the philosopher, severely. 'You're past your tether. You're clean broken loose and gone into the realms o' madness. No respect for your father? No affection for the man that begot you and bred you—your own lonely old flesh and blood that hasn't a soul in the warld beside you? Man, I'm ashamed of you. But you're angry, and a man in anger is a man beside himself.'

The lad looked straight before him over Armstrong's head, with that dogged chin of his thrust forward. One foot beat tattoo on the floor, and one hand kept time to it on the counter. He had surrendered everything for love and honour—he felt that he would have been base beyond his own contempt if he had acted otherwise—and here it was all set at naught and treated as if it were a trifle.

'I can wait a day or two, sir,' he said at length. 'I suppose I ought not to have come here hot from my quarrel. Can I see you again by-and-by?'

'Better not, lad,' said Armstrong, 'better not. I like you well, Job, but I'd rather say good-bye till you're married and settled. Good-bye, lad, and God bless you! An old man's blessing hurts nobody. Go home and make your peace with the father there, and I'll think more of you than I will of him that taketh a city.'

The grey shopkeeper was assured of his own wisdom, and his advice was no doubt admirable. But to the youngster it had this serious drawback—it was impossible to follow it. Armstrong looked at his chess-book. He believed he had found a flaw in a problem, and his mind went back to the study from which he had been diverted. The noble game had kept him poor, and now that he was old he was almost friendless. Castle Barfield was not rich in fine chess-players; a Scotchman in that Black Country parish was half a foreigner; and an abstracted fellow who seemed to sleep with his eyes open was not likely to be popular. Whilst he stood there with a living grievance before him, and troubles enough of his own within, his eyes began to look far away, his hand began to paddle on the counter in shuffling accompaniment to his windy and untuneful whistle, and he was lost to outer things. Job knew the signs and sighed savagely. In a minute or so he began to pace up and down the little shop, and Armstrong's eyes seemed to follow him with a mechanical indifference.

Suddenly the cracked bell clanked and tinkled madly, and in burst Ezekiel in a tall unbrushed beaver-hat and a bottle-green coat with brass buttons.

'Ha!' he said, glaring angrily at Job. 'I had a sort of a notion as I might find thee here. Armstrong!' The shopkeeper was awake again. 'My word 's as good as my bond, and allays was and allays will be. This young upstart 's a pauper. Mind that. He can wed wheer he likes, and please me. He can wed a wench from the brick-hill if so he wool, or out of the gutter if he likes it. I've done wi' him. From this out, he's no son o' mine.'

The shop-door was open, and two or three people were staring in from the street. Armstrong passed round the counter and shut out these observers.

'I'll just beg ye to obsairve,' he said, 'that my shop 's no bear-garden.'

'If your gell likes to wed him, let her,' cried Ezekiel; 'I've done wi' him.'

'Hold your tongue, ye poor demented creature,' said Armstrong. 'You're both with infuriate passion blind. I've told Job here that I'll not allow myself to stand between father and son. I've told him, as gently as I could, that I'll be no party to the making of a quarrel. Now I'll ask you two people to shake hands and get away home together. Job will come here no more, till he's comfortably married and settled, and then we shall be glad to see him.'

'Oh!' said Ezekiel, with a jeer. 'That's how the land lies, is it? You could have him here and mek a pet on him while he was good for poor old 'Zekiel's money. Now theer's no chance o' that left, and you can send him packin'. Eh? that's your game, is it?'

'You asked me a minute or two ago,' said Job to Armstrong, 'to respect my father.'

'The man *is* your father,' said the shopkeeper. 'It's not your place to emphasise his follies.'

'Nor to stand by and swallow the disgrace of them,' said the youngster, bitterly. 'I'm going.'

But Ezekiel set himself between his son and the door.

'So you've got the sack from both placen,' he began. 'Now tek a father's blessing.'

With that he became unreportable; but Job stood still to listen, and looked the old man in the face with eyes which cowed him after a time.

'Y' inhuman blackguard!' said Armstrong, with quiet scorn.

'Good-bye, Mr. Armstrong,' said Job, when the torrent of his father's speech was stayed. 'Come along, Pincher.'

'Shassent tek my dog wi' thee,' cried Ezekiel, being free of his son's eyes. He dashed at Pincher; but that intelligent brute had already made his choice, and he recoiled with a look so menacing that Ezekiel thought better of it. 'You've p'isoned the very dog agen me,' he said, as he drew back again.

Job, with his head up and his dogged chin stuck forward, walked round his father and opened the shop-door. The observers outside withdrew their noses from the window-panes, and stared at him as he walked into the street and took his way in the opposite direction to that in which lay his old home.

'Do you know what you've done this bitter day, man?' said Armstrong. 'You've made yourself childless.'

Ezekiel only stared at him, and the cracked bell went on tinkling.

'You're just a fool, you, with your money.'

'Betwigst the two on us,' said Mr. Round, with something of a discomfited air, 'Job's sot down on his backend. That's what he's done.'

'Fetch him back,' cried Armstrong, 'whilst there's time. I know the lad: if once he gets away, there'll be no changing him.'

Ezekiel's heart sank a little, but he laughed contemptuously. 'Fetch him back? With a hoss-whip. I've told him niver to darken *my* doors again, and what I say I stick to.'

He moved to the door and looked out. The cracked bell gave its last tinkle, and his son's figure disappeared at the bend of the road. The road looked curiously blank, and, though Ezekiel was not an imaginative man by nature, he saw his house empty at that moment, and his heart felt chilled. That, of course, only made it the more necessary that he should harden himself, and he walked into the street, bulldog all over. It struck him as he went homeward that he and Job had their backs turned to each other, and were further apart at every step. That also made it the more necessary that he should harden himself. He had triumphed—he had turned Job out of doors, and had been true to his word; but, howsoever comforting that reflection of itsel might be, he felt that he stood in need of it, and his triumph was after all a bad bargain. Since he was a man unused to combat with himself, and, as a rule, could keep conscience in a state of admirable discipline, this condition of things annoyed him, and there seemed no more natural outlet for this natural feeling of displeasure than to swear at Job. He cursed Job—tautologically, with fluency, but without variety or heartiness, and it did him less good than might have been expected.

Job, meanwhile, marched steadily away townwards, with Pincher paddling at his heels. Everybody was against him, and he might, at least, have expected Armstrong's help and friendship. He had thrown away everything, and Armstrong seemed to think it all a trifle. Very well, he should find that it was no trifle. He—Job—would suffer, and the people he left behind should be sorry for themselves. He was not less open than other men

to the influence of persuasion—or so at least he told himself. A physiognomist looking at that resolute lower jaw of his, and the grim meeting of his lips, might have been excused for forming another opinion. But any man—so he told himself again—who tried to drive him would find the task a hard one. To be bullied and browbeaten, and, worse than all, to be threatened with such a lash of cobwebs as the loss of money! As if he cared for all the money in the world as a bribe against—affection. Well, yes, affection—and perhaps self-will. He knew his faults, and perhaps he was a little inclined to be obstinate. Perhaps obstinacy might be useful to him. The world was obstinate enough, and a man had generally to hold on and worry, bulldog fashion, before he could get out of it the thing he wanted.

He tramped along with these thoughts in his mind, and in an hour's time the great town began to enfold him. Its environs were dingy, and the fringe of houses which surrounded it was scattered and broken. Walking from Castle Barfield the itinerant was accustomed to look on the Turk's Head as the first house in town, and it was not an uncommon thing for him to pause there. Job pulled up for a glass of home-brewed ale, and found himself side by side with a yokel, in smock-frock and cords, who, with one elbow on the pewter counter, tried to look *dégagé* and disinterested, whilst he listened to the patter of a recruiting sergeant. The yokel's face was flushed with beer and excitement, and the sergeant straddled across the little bar with his riding-whip at the back of his shoulders and an end of it in either hand. His spurs, his scarlet coat, his polished buttons, the handful of parti-coloured ribbons that fluttered from his cap, made the sergeant a noble figure, and his pose was easy and commanding.

'A lad like *you*!' said the sergeant, surveying the yokel's lumpy proportions with admiring eye. 'Why, God bless my soul, you'd be a-ordering *me* about in six months' time. Join us, my boy, and I only hope you'll live to be a general.'

'Have a drink, sergeant?' said Job.

'Why, thankee, sir,' said the man of war, 'I don't mind if I do. A little spot of rum, William, with a squeeze of lemon in it. Neat, William.' He swung into a new attitude, and poked the rustic in the ribs by the way. 'For a lad like you, the army's the only thing. Why, when I was quartered in the city of Cork—it's this day twelve months, as I'm a sinner—there was a lad on Cat's Hill, the very spit of you, a handsome young fellow, as like

you as two peas, a-talking to an Irish girl; and just as I walked by, says she, "Not for me, Michael. That's the sort of man for my taste. My life on the spurs," she says. "Why," says he; "I'm as good a man as that, any day." "So you are, my lad," says I. "Show a sperit," I says, "and come and join us." He took the shillin' there and then, and where d'ye think that lad is now? Why, when I saw him last he was the colonel's orderly. What d'ye think of that for a rise in life, eh?' The rustic took a contemplative pull at the pewter, and then grinned uneasily. 'My respects, sir,' said the sergeant, nodding at Job.

'I say,' said Job, suddenly laying a hand on the yokel's shoulder, 'I think I know you, young fellow.'

'I think you don't, young fellow,' replied the rustic.

'I think I do,' said Job. 'Your name 's Wigmore, and you live at the Pear Tree Farm. I thought so. Now don't you 'list, even to be a colonel's orderly,' with a keen look at the sergeant. 'And don't you humbug the lad, sergeant, even for the sake of earning three half-crowns.'

'I warn't a-going to 'list,' said the youthful Wigmore. There is something at once disgraceful and enticing in enlistment to the rustic mind. Before Job's entry he had been bent upon it, and the sergeant had felt sure of him; but now he finished his beer, and shuffled out with a shamefaced nod, a saved yokel. The sergeant looked black, and straightened his shoulders with an affronted air.

'Don't make backs at me,' said Job. 'Have another drink? You shan't lose your three half-crowns, either.'

'Why, are you game to join?' asked the sergeant, turning, and radiant again.

Job shook his head. 'No, lad, I want better pay than you can offer. But there's your money all the same. You'd have had that young fool if I hadn't come in, and I don't want to spoil any man's game.'

The sergeant stared, and, not being a very lofty man below the scarlet and the ribbons, he took the money. Job sipped his glass of beer very slowly, and the sergeant, having commanded a further supply of rum, sipped very slowly also, and the quiet was unbroken. The barman had retired, and the place, except for Job and the sergeant, was deserted.

'Excuse me,' said the soldier, touching Job's elbow, 'but are you sure you don't want to join us?'

Job looked at him oddly.

'Excuse me,' said the sergeant again, 'but why I ask, you chuck your money about pretty free, but you don't look over-jolly neither. There's worse things done every day, and a good deal greener. A man like you, as is well set up by nature, and knows how to do his duty, why he rises in the service like a rocket.'

Now the British army at that time did not open the best of all possible avenues to an honourable ambition. Bad as things are to-day, they have prodigiously mended of late years, and Job knew a thing or two for which the sergeant gave him no credit. Yet what was not common with the crowd might happen with him, and the fisher of men offered him a taking bait. When a man has no more than a pound in his pocket, and knows no way of earning a penny, he is fit to do more desperate things than enlist in the army, and the adventurer had had that way out of his difficulties pretty clearly before him ever since he and his father had turned their backs on each other.

'The pay 's a shilling a day, I believe,' said Job, sardonically.

'Well, it's a trifle over that even to begin with,' returned the sergeant, 'and you wouldn't be on that long. Why, look at me. You're a man with a better education than ever I've had, and a better headpiece I *should* say by the look of you. There's nothing in the world agen your chance of rising if you care to join. Why, a figure like yours is a point to begin with. Don't you believe, now, that our colonel isn't a smart man, because he is, and he's down on a man of merit in a day.'

'You needn't say any more,' said Job, and the sergeant's hopes fell to zero, though they had risen for a moment, fanned by the warm breeze of his own eloquence. 'I'm not to be humbugged into it; but I'll take my chance with the ruck. Give me the shilling, sergeant.'

'Are you married?' asked the sergeant, plunging into formula.

'No,' said Job.

'Are you an apprentice?'

'No. Do I look like one?'

'Bound to ask. Are you over six-and-twenty?'

'Twenty-two last birthday.'

At this moment in burst half a dozen noisy carters. The sergeant went silent, and winked at his prey with a faint sideway nod. The prey took the hint, finished his beer, and went out.

The man of war, with no sign of collusion, followed shortly afterwards, and crossing the street made for an entry between two dilapidated houses, Job and Pincher at his heels. Then in a frowsy backyard, sheltered from observation by a seven-foot wall, he continued his interrogatory.

'Ever been refused for the service?'

'No.'

'Aware of any malady which might send you back when you come before the surgeon?'

'No.'

'Then, what corps would you like to join? You don't want to join a foot regiment, of course. A man like you wants to be among a gentlemanly set, that's natural.'

A head appeared above the seven-foot wall.

'Don't you believe a word that cove 's a-saying,' said the head's owner. 'That kind o' cove 'll tell you anythink.'

'Never mind that fool,' said the sergeant.

'I don't mind him,' returned Job.

'You'll wish you had,' said the intruder, and disappeared.

'Now, a dragoon regiment is the thing for you,' the sergeant resumed in a lower and more confidential tone, 'and you can't do better than choose mine. I shouldn't like to lose sight of you for one thing. I've took a fancy to you, and I should like to meet again.'

'What's the regiment?'

'The —th Dragoon Guards, the finest in the service. There's His Majesty's shilling. I enlist you in His Majesty's service for the term of eighteen years.'

That sounded chill upon the listener's heart, and he heard nothing further except the murmur of the sergeant's voice. But the shilling was between his fingers, and the deed was done.

'Now you don't want,' began the sergeant again, 'to join the corps in a set-out like that. I'll take that suit of yours at a reasonable valuation, and give you another for it as 'll be quite good enough to travel in.'

Job declined this thoughtful offer. He had no mind to enter the barracks like a scarecrow. At least, the sergeant supposed, with an injured look, that this was not to be a dry bargain. He had never, he said, known a dry bargain to prosper. Job was willing to moisten the bargain, but he tucked His Majesty's shilling safely away. He would keep that, and would wear it on

his watch-chain when he was Captain Round, and show it for the encouragement of young soldiers.

'The court isn't sitting now,' said the sergeant. 'It's too late for to-day, but you'll have to be sworn in to-morrow. You can sleep at the barracks if you like, or you can sleep outside if you like; but if you're not at the barracks at nine o'clock in the morning you'll be liable to prosecution as a rogue and a vagabond. Is that your dog, by the way?' He eyed Pincher like a connoisseur.

'Yes,' said Job; 'that's my dog.'

'You'll have to get rid of him,' said the sergeant. 'He looks a bit o' blood, too, that dog does.'

'Oh,' returned Job, quietly, 'I shan't part with the dog.'

'By gad, you will, though,' said the sergeant. 'They'll see about that at the barracks cursed smart. You see if they won't.'

Job stuck out that obstinate underjaw of his and fell a-thinking. He had pledged himself to Pincher from the moment when that intelligent brute had chosen between his old and his present master. He had since then pledged himself to His Sacred Majesty King William the Fourth—an affair, on the face of things, much more important. The two pledges seemed likely to contradict each other. By-and-by the young man smiled. He beheld, in vision, the attempt to remove the unwilling Pincher from the master of his choice, and the vision soothed him.

The sergeant strutted by his side in something of a huff, but the prospective drink mollified him.

'What d'ye say to a drop at the barrack canteen?' he asked a minute or two later. 'You'll meet a pal or two there, fellows as has joined your corps. They start for head-quarters the day after to-morrow, so you'll have no time to wait.'

'Where are head-quarters?' asked Job.

'Dublin,' returned the sergeant. 'Ah, you're just beginning to see the world!' He cast an occasional eye on Pincher. 'I'll give you a guinea for that dog,' he said at last.

'Thank you,' said Job; 'he's worth twenty.'

'You'll have to part with him, you know,' said the sergeant. 'You can't keep him. That's rot, you know, the notion of keeping him is.'

'I shall see,' said Job. The more he looked at it the less he liked it, but he was bound. He had taken His Majesty's money, and he must obey his rules.

He slept that night in barracks, and Pincher was curled below the bedstead on which he lay. He began to think the dog might pass unnoticed. Next day he was examined by the surgeon, sworn in at the police-court, and put on rations. He spent his free time in wanderings about the streets, choosing quarters where he was least likely to be known. Pincher followed him everywhere, and the lad's sore heart fastened to him more and more. He was all that was left of old times, and he had attached himself to the wanderer of his own free will. It was not in nature to part with him.

Next day, in company with a score of recruits bound for Ireland, and a contingent of infantry some fifty strong, he marched towards Bristol. Some of the men were scarecrows, all were stupid and ribald. Job's heart was less fierce against his father than it had been, and he had never felt so tender to his friends or to the sweetheart he was leaving behind him. Pincher marched alongside, and nobody made any remark about him. The officer in charge spoke to Job once or twice, questioned him, and advised him kindly; but one or two of the non-commissioned officers were brutes, and his blood boiled a hundred times before his share of the march was over.

They were in the western country, and if he could have undertaken the tramp alone he would have found it pleasant. The weather was lovely and not too warm, the beautiful country seemed to smile softly all around him. But his companions poisoned the sweet air with abominable songs and sayings, and his heart burned with loathing.

So on to Gloucester, and at Job's billet there a grizzled old non-com. came round and observed Pincher.

'Whose dog is that?'

'Mine,' said Job.

'Send him packing,' said the old fellow, grimly.

'He's not in anybody's way,' returned Job, quietly, but in a sort of rage at heart. 'He's a valuable dog, and when I get to headquarters, if I can't keep him myself, perhaps one of the officers might care to have him.'

'Young man,' said the grizzled sergeant-major, 'you've made a mistake. The service isn't a hospital for female convalescents, and we don't allow lap-dogs. Send the brute packing.'

'Send him packing yourself,' said Job, with a grimness equal to the old fellow's own.

The sergeant-major raised his stick, and Pincher, with a look exceeding sour, drew his lips a little back, and growled.

'Quiet, Pincher,' cried Job, and the stick was lowered slowly and with caution.

The intending assailant withdrew, and Job triumphed unreasonably and before his time. In five minutes the grizzled authority was back again.

'You've got to-night to get rid of him in,' he said, looking round the edge of the door. 'If he tries to follow to-morrow he'll be shot.'

'Will he?' cried Job, jumping to his feet.

'He will,' said the old fellow, viciously, and again withdrew.

For a moment this statement alarmed the youngster, but in the next he laughed at it. It seemed too absurd to fancy a line of British soldiers called out to shoot a dog because he insisted on following a recruit to barracks. Nobody in authority would dream, or do more than dream, of such a folly. So Job possessed his heart in quiet, and that night slept in peace. Next morning Pincher came down stairs with Job, and sat, with the majesty of unconscious courage upon him, at the door of the little inn. Job was scarcely so trim as he had been a few days earlier, for travelling afoot without baggage will have a deteriorating effect upon the smartest of young men, but he was able to borrow blacking-brushes and a razor from the kit of a friendly regular, and he was smartening himself as best he could when he heard a voice at the door.

'That's the brute, sir.'

'Filthy looking-beast,' said another voice, 'have him drowned.'

Out came Job immediately, with a brush in one hand and his hat in the other. There was the grizzled old fellow of last night again, and with him a young officer with a pinched and supercilious face.

'This is the man that owns him, sir,' said the sergeant-major, indicating Job. The officer looked at the youngster with cold arrogance and turned away.

'Have the brute drowned at once,' he said.

The recruit's heart beat hard, but he stepped forward with outward composure, and bowed civilian-fashion to his officer.

'I beg your pardon, sir. Will you allow me a word?' The other turned his insolent eyes slowly on the petitioner and stared

at him with an unchanging look. 'My dog is not in anybody's way. He is an exceedingly valuable animal, and I hope that at head-quarters I shall find some one of the officers who will be kind enough to accept him.'

He extended his hands as he spoke with the natural gesture of a man who asks a favour.

'Stand at attention,' returned the officer. 'Sergeant-major, have that brute drowned if he attempts to follow the detachment.'

Job threw the brush into the passage of the little hostel, and put on his hat. Then he whistled to Pincher and walked quietly away.

'Where's that fellow going? Halt!' cried the officer. Job walked on with Pincher at his heels. The officer ran forward and caught him up. 'Halt!' he cried again. Job looked neither to left nor right, but walked on as if he neither saw nor heard. The young officer in his wrath lost his dignity, and seized the departing recruit by the arm.

'You mean to drown my dog?' asked Job, stopping short.

'Put this man under arrest,' said the officer, 'and drown that beast at once.'

There was enough in the situation to quicken thought, and in less than a second Job Round saw his position from two or three different standpoints, so that when he knocked the officer down he did it on comparatively mature reflection. There was but one way in which he could keep faith with Pincher, and breach of faith meant death to him. To keep his engagement with a bull-dog he must break a solemn promise to the King's Most Excellent Majesty. The value of the two engagements looked hugely disproportionate, and to Job's mind the weight was all on Pincher's side. So he knocked the officer down and bolted, with a shout to the dog to follow. There were wide grass-fields a hundred yards away, and the street which led to them was free of passengers. Before the grizzled sergeant-major had turned out the two or three regulars in pursuit, Job had leaped the second hedge. The men streamed along after him, and a dozen volunteers joined the chase hotly. But the deserter ran like a deer, and his start of two hundred yards was lengthened into three and then into four. They stood to watch him until he leaped a high hedge, and dropping on lower land on the other side disappeared from view, and then they trailed back to the billet of last night, and found exercise for all the comminatory eloquence of the sergeant-major.

Job heard the last sound of the hunt fade away behind him, and crouching under the tall hedge saw the pursuers returning.

'Come along, Pincher,' he said, gasping hard. 'You stuck to me, and I'll stick to you. We're rogues and vagabonds now, the pair of us.'

CHAPTER III.

In those days three copies of the *Times* used to reach Castle Barfield one day after publication, and all passed through the hands of William Armstrong, printer, stationer, newsvendor, and bookseller. The rector's copy was called for with clockwork punctuality by the rector's serving-man, the great employer's copy was despatched by messenger, and the readers at the Castle Barfield Institution for the Advancement of Christian Knowledge waited as a general thing until the newsvendor had gone through the *Times* columns at his leisure.

Job's disappearance saddened Armstrong. It was no fault of his that the lad had turned his back on the parish he was born in; yet wiser words, or a little more kindness, might have kept him back. The shopkeeper felt as if a son of his own were out in the cold.

The cracked bell tinkled on the shop-door one evening fourteen days after Job's departure, and the vicar's man and Armstrong's errand-boy came in together. The boy intercepted the mail-cart at the post-office daily, and the vicar's man always met him. Armstrong woke from his fancies, opened the little parcel, surrendered one journal to the boy, another to the servant, and himself opened and folded back the third. By chance something in the columns of advertisements—scantier then than now—caught his attention, and he strayed up and down amongst them, trifling with his appetite and using the publishers' announcements as a sort of *hors d'œuvre.* All on a sudden he read one little paragraph at a glance. It began with a 'Whereas' in large type, and ended with 'the above reward,' in small, and between the two it told a story which Armstrong seemed to read by a kind of inspiration. 'John Smith, six feet one inch in height, chest measurement forty-one inches, age two-and-twenty, hair red, eyes grey and large, had enlisted in the town of Birmingham on the fifteenth instant, and had on the twenty-second deserted in the

city of Gloucester, after committing a brutal assault upon one Captain Coninghame. Was respectably attired in civilian costume, and accompanied by a bull-dog answering to the name of Pincher. Any person giving such information as would lead to the apprehension of the said John Smith should receive on application to Messrs Begg & Bagg, of Chancery Lane, London, solicitors to the aforesaid Captain Coninghame, the sum of fifty guineas.'

'The lad 's clean ruined,' sighed Armstrong, dropping the paper on his knees, 'and a fugitive from the face of justice.'

The bull-dog answering to the name of Pincher would have banished doubt at once, if any room had existed for doubt to find a foothold upon. A John Smith who stood Job Round's height, carried his age, wore his hair, and looked out of his eyes, and who, moreover, enlisted in His Majesty's service on the day of Job's departure, wore a thin disguise indeed to Armstrong's fancy.

'A sore heart,' said Armstrong, half aloud, 'is oftentimes an angry heart, and the lad went away wounded to the quick. I might have seen a way to hinder it. Any way, there is no reason why this ill-news should travel round the parish if I can help it. It's a poor precaution, but I'll take it.'

He folded the paper firmly, and in such wise that the advertisement came to the edge. Then with a wet finger he rubbed at it until John Smith and the dog who answered to the name of 'Pincher' went out of being so far as that copy was concerned. It looked as if the journal had been frayed in travelling.

'There'll be no gossip at the reading-room at least,' he said as he surveyed his work. It was growing dusk, and he began to light the dull shop lamps. As he fixed the last, and laid a hand upon the paper, the street-door opened, and a buxom woman entered, with a quaint figure in her rear.

'Shut the door, Clem,' said the buxom woman. 'How be you, Mr. Armstrong, and how's the missis?'

'Pretty well,' he answered. 'And how's Mistress Bache? Is that Clement? The lad's growing finely.'

'Come and shake hands wi' Mr. Armstrong, Clem.'

The odd figure came into the light, and reached a hand like a blanched claw across the counter. Armstrong bent over and took it gently, looking downwards at a mere child of seven or eight, with an aged face, and a form so twisted and distorted that it excited almost as much surprise as pity.

'Well, Clement! How's all with you?'

'I've been pretty well for a day or two, thank you, sir,' said Clement, smiling.

'That's hearty, lad, that's hearty,' said the bookseller. 'You'll be for more books now, I'll be bound. You'll have done with the "Animated Nature," eh?'

'Not yet, sir,' the child answered; 'I should like to keep it longer, if you'll let me.'

'Ay, ay, lad, keep it as long as you need it. Come in, Mistress Bache. Come in, Clement. Mistress Armstrong will be glad to see you.'

A door at the back of the shop opened into a sterile apartment, which had no air of habitual occupation. The furniture was wrapped in clinging cerements, and the air of the room was chill. Beyond this family sarcophagus lay the kitchen, a room all warmth and brightness. Here the young male Armstrongs sat at a big table, each with his hands buried in his hair, and a book at his nose. The young female Armstrongs sat at the side of the hearth, on which a small but clear fire was burning. They burn fires all the year round in the coal countries. All rose to greet the new comers, and Mrs. Armstrong, at the sound of voices, emerged from a pantry, which was built out in one corner of the room, and shook hands warmly.

In the brighter light the child's face, though prematurely aged, showed a beauty of its own. His eyes were large and of a lovely brown, and his whole expression was intelligent and docile. Mouth and chin were especially sweet in expression, and his thick brown curls clustered close about a head of perfect form, and framed a forehead both broad and lofty. Armstrong patted his brown curls gently, and the three girls knelt about him and kissed him. By-and-by he escaped them, and made for a big-nosed lad at the table.

'What are you reading, David?'

'Oh!' said David, with the prolonged drawl of the district, 'It's about a fellow as bolted away from home, like Job Round.'

The eldest Miss Armstrong dissolved in tears, and the boy's mother made a dash at him. The offender dived with great dexterity, and evaded chastisement.

'Go and mind the shop, David,' said his father.

David withdrew, with a beckoning finger extended to the child, who followed him.

'Should you like to hear a tale, Clem?'

'Yes. Tell me that one about Friar Tuck and the Black Knight.'

'Oh, blow them. D'ye know the Keffel of Gabdad?'

'No,' said Clem, settling himself nestlingly at the other's knees; 'tell it.'

David thereupon began to relate one of the better-known adventures of the great Haroun Alraschid, and in a while Clem broke in:

'I know that. They lit all the lights in the grand pavilion where the fair Persian lived. Job told me. Only *he* called it the Caliph of Bagdad.'

'Oh, bother the naäm,' said David. 'When I'm readin' a tale I niver stop for the naäms.'

'I shouldn't like not to know Job's name now he's gone away,' said Clem, wistfully.

'What's he got to do with it?' asked David.

'Why, it's like that,' Clem answered, too vaguely for David's apprehension. 'Do you think Job'll come back again?'

'I dunno,' said David. 'Our Grace is allays bustin' out a-cryin' if you talk about him.'

'Perhaps she liked him,' said Clem, doubtfully.

'You're a rum un, Clem,' remarked David, rubbing his own big nose in a thoughtful way. 'You ain't like a young un. You're like a old un.'

'Tell me about Friar Tuck and the Black Knight,' said Clem. 'I know the other one, and you never finished that.'

David began on the Friar's singing and the Black Knight thundering at the door. He reduced Sir Walter to the Castle Barfield idiom, but the translation was spirited and veracious. It held them both spell-bound for half an hour, and in the meantime their elders in the kitchen talked of things in general, and avoided mention of Job Round. Things had gone so prosperously with the boys that the Black Knight was doing nothing in the lists in a new series of his adventures, when the cracked bell tinkled for the first time on their ears, and Mr. Ezekiel Round entered.

'Gi' me a shillin' bottle o' writin'-flewid,' said Ezekiel.

The boy shrieked 'Father,' through the open door at the back of the shop, and Armstrong came in placidly from his perusal of yesterday's news, with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead. He did not at first notice Ezekiel, but stood vacantly pushing

things about the counter, and waiting for a statement of the customer's desires.

'Gi' me a shillin' bottle o' writin'-flewid,' said Ezekiel again. Armstrong peered at him doubtfully, and, being sure of him, began to rummage on the shelves. 'Send them childern into the house,' Ezekiel said a moment later, and Armstrong despatched them by a wave of the hand.

'What's your will?' he asked.

'Have you heard anything from my son Job?' inquired Ezekiel, hoarsely.

'Not a word,' answered the stationer. Ezekiel fidgeted with his watch seals and the loose coin in his pocket. 'You're learning wisdom like the rest of us?' said Armstrong.

'I thought you might ha' done,' said Ezekiel; 'an' I called to tell you, once for all, mind you, as, if you did, you could tell him as he needn't expect nothing out o' me.'

'You're just hungering for a word from the lad!' cried Armstrong.

'Not me,' replied Ezekiel. 'If he writes to you, you can tell him as I'm done wi' him. Done wi' him, for good and all.'

'Man,' said the Scotchman, 'but I'm sorry for you. Ye may hear of him again, but I'm sore afraid ye'll meet no more. You've driven the puir lad to desperation.' He moved away to close the door, and returning leaned across the counter, and spoke in a solemn murmur: 'He's proclaimed. There's a price of fifty guineas upon his head. Man, man,' he broke out suddenly, 'it's hard upo' ye, though ye desairved it. He'll never write to ye to beg your help, for I know his dour heart o'er well. Ye'll see your flesh and blood no more, Ezekiel Round, and ye cut it away and passed it through the fire unto Moloch with your own hand.'

'What's he done?' demanded Ezekiel, in dismay.

'He enlisted,' Armstrong whispered, 'the day he left this, under the name of John Smith, and on the fifteenth of this present month. On the twenty-second he assaulted an officer and deserted, and there's a price of fifty guineas upon his head.'

Ezekiel sat down upon a pile of printing paper.

'That's a sore shame,' he said, 'to befall a daycent family.'

'If ever he writes to me, and he may well do that,' said Armstrong, 'I'll let ye see the letter. He'll be sad and sore and sorry many'll be the time or ever he wins back to Castle Barfield.'

'He mon't look for nothin' from me,' cried Ezekiel, rising.

'Then look you,' returned Armstrong, 'for nothing from Heaven in your distresses.'

Ezekiel breathed hard at him, and lifting the unbrushed beaver, mopped his forehead with a red cotton handkerchief.

'You're a hard feller, Armstrong,' he said at last. The stationer had slipped down his spectacles to look at him, and shook his head at this, mournfully.

'I'm hard?' he said. 'Well, maybe I'm harder on you than one poor mortal has a right to be upon another. But you'd anger a wise man, let alone a fool like me. Why, man, I see through you like a pane o' glass. You're just wretched at home, and ye think, "I'll get down to Armstrong and see if he knows aught about my lad that I drove out o' the house like a dog, a fortnight back"; and ye come here, if it weren't for your own pig-headed pride, ready to take him back to your heart, and then ye've the impudence to tell me that ye're in as silly a pet as ye were when I last saw ye. Hoots, man! when I know all the while that ye long to see him, and would give a thousand pounds never to have quarrelled with him.'

'I wouldn't gi' twopence,' growled Ezekiel.

'There, there,' said Armstrong, almost snappishly. 'Take away your writing-fluid, if that's what ye cam' for. And when I hear from Job, if ever I do, I'll refrain from troubling you about him.'

'If my son 's that onfilial,' said Ezekiel, 'as he can't write to his own father, I bain't a-going to trouble no more about him.'

'Take your purchased goods,' returned Armstrong, 'and leave my shop.'

'It ain't no wonder,' said Ezekiel, 'as you ain't got a better trade, if that's how you talk to your customers.'

Armstrong's anger vanished at this, and he smiled outright.

'I am like the melancholy Jaques, Mr. Round,' he said; 'it is meat and drink to me to see a—— man of your mental build.'

'There's no meanin' in half the things as you say,' returned Mr. Round. 'I'll tek the writin'-flewid wi' me, and theer's your shilling. If Job writes to you, you can tell him as I've a-done wi' him for good an' all. He's got naught to look for from me. He took me at a word, and he left my house, an' now he'll ha' to stop away.'

The buxom woman appeared, with Clem's pitiful figure behind her. She bade Armstrong good-night in a hurried and frightened

way, and bobbed a reluctant curtsey at Ezekiel, who knew himself the cause of her tremor. He was not so dull but he could see how people looked askance at him.

'Hillo!' he said clumsily; 'is that thee, Clem? I've got a sixpince somewhere. Ah, here it is! Here's a sixpince for thee, Clem.'

But Clem drew back from him in undisguised fear and aversion, and Ezekiel, with an indistinct murmur about pride and upstarts, snatched up his purchase and left the shop.

'They'm all agen me, cuss 'em,' he said bitterly. 'An' all becos I wouldn't let my lad ride roughshod over me, when he wanted to talk equal to his own father.'

To be continued.

CHARLES DICKENS AT HOME.

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS RELATIONS WITH CHILDREN.

BY HIS ELDEST DAUGHTER.

Charles Dickens was a very little and a very sickly boy, but he had always the belief that this circumstance had brought to him the inestimable advantage of having greatly inclined him to reading.

When money troubles came upon his parents, the poor little fellow was taken away from school and kept for some time at an occupation most distasteful to him, with every surrounding that could jar on sensitive and refined feelings. But the great hardship, and the one which he felt most acutely, was the want of the companionship of boys of his own age. A few years later on we read in 'Mr. Forster's Life' a schoolfellow's description of Charles Dickens: 'A healthy-looking boy, small but well-built, with a more than usual flow of spirits, inclining to harmless fun, seldom or never, I think, to mischief. He usually held his head more erect than lads ordinarily do, and there was a general smartness about him.' This is also a very good personal description of the man.

I have never heard him refer in any way to his own childish days, excepting in one instance, when he would tell the story of how, when he lived at Chatham, he and his father often passed Gad's Hill in their walks, and what an admiration he had for the red-brick house with its beautiful old cedar trees, and how it seemed to him to be larger and finer than any other house; and how his father would tell him that if he were to be very persevering and were to work hard he might perhaps some day come to live in it. I have heard him tell this story over and over again, when he had become the possessor of the very place which had taken such a hold upon his childish affections. Beyond this I cannot recall a single instance of any allusion being made by him to his own early childhood.

He believed the power of observation in very young children to be close and accurate, and he thought that the recollection of most of us could go further back than we suppose. I do not know

how far my own memory may carry me back, but I have no remembrance of my childhood which is not immediately associated with him.

He had a wonderful attraction for children and a quick perception of their character and disposition; a most winning and easy way with them, full of fun, but also of a graver sympathy with their many small troubles and perplexities, which made them recognise a friend in him at once.

I have often seen mere babies, who would look at no other stranger present, put out their tiny arms to him with unbounded confidence, or place a small hand in his and trot away with him, quite proud and contented at having found such a companion; and although with his own children he had sometimes a sterner manner than he had with others, there was not one of them who feared to go to him for help and advice, knowing well that there was no trouble too trivial to claim his attention, and that in him they would always find unvarying justice and love. When any treat had to be asked for, the second little daughter, always a pet of her father's, was pushed into his study by the other children, and always returned triumphant. He wrote special prayers for us as soon as we could speak, interested himself in our lessons, would give prizes for industry, for punctuality, for neat and unblotted copy-books. A word of commendation from him was indeed most highly cherished, and would set our hearts glowing with pride and pleasure.

His study, to us children, was rather a mysterious and awe-inspiring chamber, and while he was at work no one was allowed to enter it. We little ones had to pass the door as quietly as possible, and our little tongues left off chattering. But at no time through his busy life was he too busy to think of us, to amuse us, or to interest himself in all that concerned us. Ever since I can remember anything I remember him as the good genius of the house, and as its happy, bright, and funny genius. He had a peculiar tone of voice and way of speaking for each of his children, who could tell, without being called by name, which was the one addressed. He had funny songs which he used to sing to them before they went to bed. One in particular, about an old man who caught cold and rheumatism while sitting in an omnibus, was a great favourite, and as it was accompanied by sneezes, coughs, and gesticulations, it had to be sung over and over again before the small audience was satisfied.

I can see him now, through the mist of years, with a child nearly always on his knee at this time of the evening, his bright and beautiful eyes full of life and fun. I can hear his clear, sweet voice as he sang to those children as if he had no other occupation in the world but to amuse them; and when they grew older, and were able to act little plays, it was their father himself who was teacher, manager, and prompter to the infant amateurs. These theatricals were undertaken as earnestly and seriously as were those of the grown-up people. He would teach the children their parts separately; what to do and how to do it, acting himself for their edification. At one moment he would be the dragon in 'Fortunio,' at the next one of the seven servants, then a jockey—played by the youngest child, whose little legs had much difficulty to get into the tiny top-boots—until he had taken every part in the play.

As with his grown-up company of actors, so with his juvenile company, did his own earnestness and activity work upon them and affect each personally. The shyest and most awkward child would come out quite brilliantly under his patient and always encouraging training.

At the juvenile parties he was always the ruling spirit. He had acquired by degrees an excellent collection of conjuring tricks, and on Twelfth Night—his eldest son's birthday—he would very often, dressed as a magician, give a conjuring entertainment, when a little figure which appeared from a wonderful and mysterious bag, and which was supposed to be a personal friend of the conjuror, would greatly delight the audience by his funny stories, his eccentric voice and way of speaking, and by his miraculous appearances and disappearances. Of course a plum pudding was made in a hat, and was always one of the great successes of the evening. I have seen many such puddings, but no other conjuror has been able to put into a pudding all the love, sympathy, fun, and thorough enjoyment which seemed to come from the hands of this great magician. Then, when supper time came, he would be everywhere at once, serving, cutting up the great twelfth cake, dispensing the bonbons, proposing toasts, and calling upon first one child and then another for a song or recitation. How eager the little faces looked for each turn to come round, and how they would blush and brighten up when the magician's eyes looked their way!

One year, before a Twelfth Night dance, when his two daughters

were quite tiny girls, he took it into his head that they must teach him and his friend John Leech the polka. The lessons were begun as soon as thought of, and continued for some time. It must have been rather a funny sight to see the two small children teaching those two men—Mr. Leech was over six feet—to dance, all four as solemn and staid as possible.

As in everything he undertook so in this instance did Charles Dickens throw his whole heart into the dance. No one could have taken more pains than he did, or have been more eager and anxious, or more conscientious about steps and time than he was. And often, after the lesson was over, he would jump up and have a practice by himself. When the night of the party came both the small dancing mistresses felt anxious and nervous. I know that the heart of one beat very fast when the moment for starting off arrived. But both pupils acquitted themselves perfectly, and were the admiration of all beholders.

Sir Roger de Coverley was always the finale to those dances, and was a special favourite of Charles Dickens, who kept it up as long as possible, and was as unflagging in his dancing enthusiasm as was his own 'Fizziwig' in his.

There can be but little doubt that the children who came to those parties, and who have lived to grow up to be men and women, remember them as something bright and sunny in their young lives, and must always retain a loving feeling for their kind and genial host.

In those early days when he was living in Devonshire Terrace, his children were quite babies. And when he paid his first visit to America—accompanied by Mrs. Dickens—they were left under the care of some relations and friends. Anyone reading 'The Letters of Charles Dickens' must be touched by his frequent allusions to these children, and by the love and tenderness expressed in his longings to see them again.

I can recall but very little of those days. I can remember our being obliged to spend much of the time at the house of a dear and good friend, but where the children of the house were very severely and sternly brought up. And I can remember how my little sister used to cry whenever she had to go there. I have also a vague remembrance of the return of the travellers, and of being lifted up to a gate and kissing my father through the bars. I do not know how the gate came to be shut, but imagine that he, in his impatience and eagerness to see us again, must have

jumped out of the carriage before there was time for the gate to be opened.

I cannot at all recall his appearance at this time, but know from old portraits that his face was beautiful. I think he was fond of dress, and must have been rather a dandy in his way. Carrying my memory further on, I *can* remember him as very handsome. He had a most beautiful mouth, sensitive, strong, and full of character. This was, unfortunately, hidden when he took to wearing—some years afterwards—a beard and moustache. But this is the only alteration I can remember in him, as to me his face never seemed to change at all. He had always an active, young, and boyish-looking figure, and a way of holding his head a little thrown back, which was very characteristic. This carriage of the head, and his manner altogether, are exactly inherited by one of his sons.

Charles Dickens was always a great walker, but in these days he rode and drove more than he did in later years. He was fond of the game of battledore and shuttlecock, and used constantly to play with friends on summer evenings. There is a little drawing by the late Daniel Maclise, where a shuttlecock is to be seen in the air. This is suggestive of many and many a pleasant evening in the garden, which was shut in all round by a high wall, and where, in summer time, a tent was always put up, and where after dinner the family would adjourn for 'dessert.' This was always considered by us a special treat.

As the children grew older, there were evenings when they would be allowed to drive out into the country, and then get out of the carriage and walk with 'Papa.' It seems now as if the wild flowers which used to be gathered on those evenings in the country lanes were sweeter and more beautiful than any which grow nowadays! The very lanes have all disappeared and grown into houses. But the memory of the one who originated those treats, and who was the good spirit of the time, can *never* be blotted out.

Charles Dickens brought a little white Havannah spaniel with him from America, and from that time there were always various pets about the house. In particular there was an eagle and a raven. The eagle had a sort of grotto made for him in the garden, to which he was chained, and being chained he was not quite such an object of terror to the children as the raven was. This raven, with his mischievous nature, delighted in frightening

them. One of the little daughters had very chubby, rosy legs, and the raven used to run after and peck at them, until poor 'Tatie's leds' became a constant subject for commiseration. Yet the raven was a great source of amusement to the family, and there were countless funny stories about him. He was especially wicked to the eagle; as soon as his food was brought to him, the raven would swoop down upon it, take it just beyond the eagle's reach, mount guard over it, dancing round it, and chuckling. When he considered he had tantalised the poor bird enough, he would eat the food as deliberately and slowly as possible, and then hop away perfectly contented with himself. He was not the celebrated Grip of 'Barnaby Rudge,' but was given after the death of that bird.

In bringing up his children, Charles Dickens was always most anxious to impress upon them that as long as they were honest and truthful, so would they always be sure of having justice done to them. To show how strongly he felt about this, and what a horror he had of their being frightened, or in any way unnecessarily intimidated, his own words shall be quoted:—

'In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter.' And again:—'It would be difficult to overstate the intensity and accuracy of an intelligent child's observation. At that impressible time of life, it must sometimes produce a fixed impression. If the fixed impression be of an object terrible to the child, it will be (for want of reasoning upon) inseparable from great fear. Force the child at such a time, be Spartan with it, send it into the dark against its will, and you had better murder it.'

He was always tender with us, as I have said, in our small troubles and trials. When the time came for the eldest son to be sent to a boarding-school, there was great grief in the nursery at Devonshire Terrace, and he came unexpectedly upon one of his daughters who was putting away some school-books, and crying bitterly at the time. To him the separation could not have seemed such a terrible one, as the boy was certainly to come home once a month, if not once a week. But he soothed the weeping child, and reasoned with her, being much the same

arguments as he did years afterwards, when the well-beloved Plorn went to Australia—namely, that these partings were 'Hard, hard things, but must be borne,' until at last the sobs ceased, and the poor aching little heart had found consolation in his loving sympathy.

There are so many people, good, kind, and affectionate, but who can *not* remember that they once were children themselves, and looked out upon the world with a child's eyes *only*!

A third daughter was born in Devonshire Terrace, but only lived to be nine months old. Her death was very sudden, and happened while Charles Dickens was presiding at a public dinner. He had been playing with the baby before starting for the dinner, and the little thing was then as well and as bright as possible.

An evening or two after her death, some beautiful flowers were sent and were brought into the study, and the father was about to take them upstairs and place them on the little dead baby, when he suddenly gave way completely. It is always very terrible to see a man weep; but to see your own father weep, and to see this for the first time as a child, fills you with a curious awe.

When the grave where the little Dora was buried was opened, a few years ago, and the tiny coffin was seen lying at the bottom of it, the remembrance of that evening in the study at Devonshire Terrace was fresh in the minds of some of those who were standing at the grave.

It was always a great honour and delight to any of the children to have any special present from 'Papa,' and on the occasion of a daughter's birthday a watch had been promised, and the day was eagerly looked forward to by the whole of the family. When the morning arrived, Charles Dickens was not well, and was unable to get up to breakfast, but the little girl was sent for, and went up to his bedside in a state of trembling and anxious expectation. He put his arms round her and kissed her, wishing her 'Many happy returns of the day,' and took a case from under his pillow and opened it. But when she saw first a gold watch, and then when he turned it and showed an enamelled back, with her initials also in enamel, it was many seconds before the joyful Oh! could be gasped out; but when it *did* come, and she met her father's eyes, I don't think they were freer from a certain sort of moisture than were those of the happy and delighted child.

When the move was made from Devonshire Terrace to Tavistock House—a far larger and handsomer house than the old home—Charles Dickens promised his daughters a better bedroom than they had ever had before, and told them that he should choose 'the brightest of papers' for it, but that they were not to see 'the gorgeous apartment' until it was ready for their use. But when the time came for the move, and the two girls were shown their room, it surpassed even their expectations. They found it full of love and thoughtful care, and as pretty and as fresh as their hearts could desire, and with not a single thing in it which had not been expressly chosen for them, or planned by their father. The wall-paper was covered with wild flowers, the two little iron bedsteads were hung with a flowery chintz. There were two toilet tables, two writing tables, two easy chairs, &c., &c., all so pretty and elegant, and this in the days when bedrooms were not, as a rule, so luxurious as they are now.

Notwithstanding his constant and arduous work, he was never too busy to be unmindful of the comfort and welfare of those about him, and there was not a corner in any of his homes, from kitchen to garret, which was not constantly inspected by him, and which did not boast of some of his neat and orderly contrivances. We used to laugh at him sometimes and say we believed that he was personally acquainted with every nail in the house.

It was in this home, some few years later, that the first grown-up theatricals were given. And these theatricals were very remarkable, in that nearly every part was filled by some celebrated man in either literature or art.

Besides being a really great actor, Charles Dickens as a manager was quite incomparable. His 'company' was as well trained as any first-class professional company, and although always kind and pleasant, he was feared and looked up to by every member of his company. The rehearsals meant business and hard work, and sometimes even tears to a few, when all did not go quite satisfactorily. Each one knew that there could be no trifling, no playing at work. As in the children's performances so in these later ones did he know every part, and enter heart and soul into each character. If any new idea came into his head, he would at once propound it to the actor or actress, who, looking upon that earnest face and active figure, would do his or her very best to gain a managerial smile of approval.

He had a temporary theatre built out into the garden, and the scenes were painted by some of the greatest scene-painters of the day. A drop-scene, representing Eddystone lighthouse, by the late Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., was afterwards framed and covered with glass, and hung in the entrance hall of Gad's Hill.

In the play called 'The Lighthouse,' written by Mr. Wilkie Collins, the great effect at the end of an act was to come from a storm, and the rehearsing of this storm was a very serious matter indeed. There was a long wooden box with peas in it, to be moved slowly up and down to represent rain—a wheel to be turned for wind—a piece of oilcloth to be dashed upon oilcloth and slowly dragged away, for the waves coming up and then receding, carrying the pebbles along with them—a heavy weight rolled about upon the floor above the stage, for thunder, &c., &c.

At the time of the storm the manager's part kept him on the stage, but during rehearsal he somehow or other managed to be in the hall where the storm was worked, as well as on the stage, for he sometimes appeared with the rain, sometimes with the wind, sometimes with the thunder, until he had seen each separate part made perfect. This storm was pronounced by the audience a most wonderful success. I know there was such a noise 'behind the scenes' that we could not hear ourselves speak, and it was most amusing to watch all the actors in their sailor dresses and their various 'make-ups,' gravely and solemnly pounding away at these raw materials.

Then the suppers after these evenings were so delightful! Many and many of the company, besides the dear manager, have passed away, but many still remain to remember them.

Until he came into possession of Gad's Hill, Charles Dickens was in the habit of removing his whole household to some sea-side place every summer. For many years Broadstairs was the favourite spot, and for some seasons he rented a house there, called Fort House. It stood on a hill surrounded by a nice garden, a little out of the town, and close to the cliff, and was a home of which he was very fond. Since those days the name of it has been changed to Bleak House. During these seaside visits he would take long walks, in all weathers—and always accompanied by one faithful friend and companion—and would get as brown and as weather-beaten as any of the sailors about, of whom he was the special favourite. I think he had some of

the sailor element in himself. One always hears of sailors being so neat, handy, and tidy, and he possessed all these qualities to a wonderful extent. When a sea captain retires, his garden is always the trimmest about, the gates are painted a bright green, and of course he puts up a flag-staff. The garden at Gad's Hill was the trimmest and the neatest, green paint was on every place where it could possibly be put, and the flag-staff had an endless supply of flags.

There was one year spent in Italy, when the children were still very young, and another year in Switzerland, at Lausanne; but after Broadstairs, Boulogne became the favourite watering-place. It was here, in a charming villa, quite out of the town, that he and his youngest son, 'The Plorn,' would wander about the garden together admiring the flowers, the little fellow being taught to show his admiration by holding up his tiny arms. It was a pretty sight to watch them down the long avenue, the baby looking so sweet in its white frock and blue ribbons, either carried in his father's arms, or toddling by his side with his little hand in his, and a most perfect understanding between them! There were always anecdotes to be told of the Plorn after these walks, when his father invariably wound up with the assertion that he was 'a noble boy.' Being the youngest of the family, he was made a great pet of, especially by his father, and was kept longer at home than any of his brothers had been.

Charles Dickens writes to his sister-in-law in the year 1856:— 'Kiss the Plorn for me, and expound to him that I am always looking forward to meeting him again, among the birds and flowers in the garden on the side of the hill at Boulogne.' And when he had to part with this son in 1868, he says in a letter to a friend, 'Poor Plorn is gone to Australia. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to me to become once more my youngest and favourite little child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken.' The housekeeper at his office, who saw him after he had taken leave of the boy, told 'how she had never seen the master so upset, and that when she asked him how Mr. Edward went off he burst into tears, and couldn't answer her a word.'

During the years spent at Tavistock House one of his daughters was, for a time, a great invalid, and after a worse attack of illness than usual her father suggested that she should be carried as far

as the study, and lie on the sofa there, while he was at work. This was of course considered an immense privilege, and even if she had not felt as weak and ill as she did, she would have been bound to remain as still and quiet as possible. For some time there was no sound to be heard in the room but the rapid working of the pen, when suddenly he jumped up, went to the looking-glass, rushed back to his writing-table and jotted down a few words; back to the glass again, this time talking to his own reflection, or rather to the simulated expression he saw there, and was trying to catch before drawing it in words, then back again to his writing. After a little he got up again, and stood with his back to the glass, talking softly and rapidly for a long time, then *looking* at his daughter, but certainly never *seeing* her, then once more back to his table, and to steady writing until luncheon time. It was a curious experience, and a wonderful thing to see him throwing himself so entirely *out* of himself and *into* the character he was writing about. His daughter has very seldom mentioned this incident, feeling as if it would be almost a breach of confidence to do so. But in these reminiscences of her father, she considers it only right that this experience should be mentioned, showing as it does his characteristic earnestness and method of work.

Often, after a hard morning's writing, when he has been alone with his family, and no visitors in the house, he has come in to luncheon and gone through the meal without uttering a word, and then has gone back again to the work in which he was so completely absorbed. Then again, there have been times when his nerves have been strung up to such a pitch that any sudden noise, such as the dropping of a spoon, or the clatter of a plate, seemed to cause him real agony. He never could bear the least noise when he was writing, and waged a fierce war against all organ-grinders, bands, &c.

In 1856 the purchase of Gad's Hill was made. Charles Dickens had never been inside the house until it was his own. For once we may hope and believe that a childish dream was realised, for certainly some of the happiest years of his home-life were spent in the house he had so coveted and admired when he was quite a small boy. 'It has never been to me like any other house,' were his own words.

For the first three years, Gad's Hill was only used by him as a summer residence, but after the sale of Tavistock House, in

1860, it became his home; and from this time, until the year of his death, his great delight was to make 'the little freehold' as comfortable, complete, and pretty as possible. Every year he had some 'bright idea,' or some contemplated 'wonderful improvement' to propound to us. And it became quite a joke between him and his youngest daughter—who was constantly at Gad's Hill—as to what the next improvement was to be. These additions and alterations gave him endless amusement and delight, and he would watch the growing of each one with the utmost eagerness and impatience. The most important *out*-door 'improvement' he made, was a tunnel to connect the garden with the shrubbery, which lay on the opposite side of the high road, and could only be approached by leaving the garden, crossing the road, and unlocking a gate. The work of excavation began, of course from each side, and on the day when it was supposed that the picks would meet and the light appear, Charles Dickens was so excited that he had to 'knock off work,' and stood for hours waiting for this consummation, and when at last it did come to pass, the workmen were all 'treated,' and there was a general jubilee. This 'improvement' was a great success, for the shrubbery was a nice addition to the garden, and moreover in it, facing the road, grew two very large and beautiful cedar-trees. Some little time after Monsieur Fechter sent his friend a two-roomed châlet, which was placed in the shrubbery. The upper room was prettily furnished, and fitted all round with looking-glasses to reflect the view, and was used by Charles Dickens as a study throughout the summer. He had a passion for light, bright colours, and looking-glass. When he built a new drawing-room he had two mirrors sunk into the wall opposite each other, which, being so placed, gave the effect of an endless corridor. I do not remember how many rooms could thus be counted, but he would often call some of us, and ask if we could make out another room, as *he* certainly could.

For one 'improvement' he had looking-glass put into each panel of the dining-room door, and showing it to his youngest daughter said, with great pride, 'Now, what do you say to *this*, Katie?' She laughed and said, 'Well, really, papa, I think when you're an angel your wings will be made of looking-glass, and your crown of scarlet geraniums!'

He loved all flowers, but especially bright flowers, and scarlet geraniums were his favourite of all. There were two large beds

of these on the front lawn, and when they were fully out, making one scarlet mass, there was blaze enough to satisfy even *him*. Even in dress he was fond of a great deal of colour, and the dress of a friend who came to his daughter's wedding quite delighted him because it was trimmed with a profusion of cherry-coloured ribbon. He used constantly to speak about it afterwards in terms of the highest admiration.

The large dogs at Gad's Hill were quite a feature of the place, and were also rather a subject of dread to outsiders. But this was desirable, as the house really required protection, standing as it did on the high road, which was frequented by tramps of a wild and low order, who, in the hopping season, were sometimes even dangerous; and the dogs, though as gentle as possible to their own people, knew that they were the guardians of the place, and were terribly fierce to all intruders. Linda—a St. Bernard, and a beautiful specimen of that breed—had been as a puppy living in the garden at Tavistock House before she was taken to Gad's Hill. She and Turk, a mastiff, were constant companions in all their master's walks. When he was away from home, and the ladies of the family were out alone with the dogs, Turk would at once feel the responsibility of his position, and guard them with unusual devotion, giving up all play in an instant when he happened to see any suspicious-looking figure approaching; and he never made a mistake in discovering the tramp. He would then keep on the outside of the road, close to his mistresses, with an ominous turning up of the lip, and with anything but the usually mild expression in his beautiful large brown eyes, and he would give many a look back before he thought it safe to be off again on his own account. Of all the large dogs—and there were many at different times—these two were the best loved by their dear master.

Mrs. Bouncer, a little white Pomeranian with black eyes and nose, the very sweetest and most bewitching of her sex, was a present to the eldest daughter, and was brought by her, a puppy of only six weeks old, to Tavistock House. 'The boys,' knowing that the little dog was to arrive, were ready to receive their sister at the door, and escorted her, in a tremendous state of excitement, up to the study. But when the little creature was put down on the floor to be exhibited to Charles Dickens, and showed her pretty figure and little bushy tail curling tightly over her back, they could keep quiet no longer, but fairly screamed and danced with

delight. From that moment he took to the little dog and made a pet of her, and it was he who gave her the name of Mrs. Bouncer. He delighted to see her out with the large dogs, because she looked 'so preposterously small' by the side of them. He had a peculiar voice and way of speaking for her, which she knew perfectly well and would respond to at once, running to him from any part of the house or garden directly she heard the call. To be stroked with a foot had great fascinations for Mrs. Bouncer, and my father would often and often take off his boot of an evening and sit stroking the little creature while he read or smoked for an hour together. And although there were times, I fear, when her sharp bark must have irritated him, there never was an angry word for Bouncer.

Then there was Dick, the eldest daughter's canary, another important member of the household, who came out of his cage every morning at breakfast time and hopped about the table, pecking away at anything he had a fancy for, and perching upon the heads or shoulders of those present. Occasionally he would have naughty fits, when he would actually dare to peck his master's cheek. He took strong likes and dislikes, loving some people and really hating others. But a word from his mistress called him to order at once, and he would come to her when so called from any part of the room. After she had been away from home she always on her return went to the room where Dick lived and put her head just inside the door. At the very sight of her the bird would fly to the corner of his cage and sing as if his little throat would burst. Charles Dickens constantly followed his daughter and peeped into the room behind her, just to see Dick's rapturous reception of his mistress. When this pet bird died he had him buried in the garden, and a rose-tree planted over his grave, and wrote his epitaph:—

This is the grave of

DICK,

The best of birds.
Born at Broadstairs, Midsr. 1851.
Died at Gad's Hill Place, 14th Oct., 1866.

While Dick lived cats were of course tabooed, and were never allowed about the house; but after his death a white kitten called Williamina was given to one of the family, and she and her numerous offspring had a happy home at Gad's Hill.

This cat ingratiated herself into favour with every one in the house, but she was particularly devoted to the master. Once, after a family of kittens had been born, she had a fancy that they should live in the study. So she brought them up, one by one, from the kitchen floor, where a comfortable bed had been provided for them, and deposited them in a corner of the study. They were taken down stairs by order of the master, who said he really could *not* allow the kittens to be in his room. Williamina tried again, but again with the same result. But when the third time she carried a kitten up the stairs into the hall, and from there to the study window, jumping in with it in her mouth, and laying it at her master's feet, until the whole family were at last before him, and she herself sat down beside them and gave him an imploring look, he could resist no longer, and Williamina carried the day. As the kittens grew up they became very rampagious, and swarmed up the curtains and played on the writing-table, and scampered among the book-shelves, and made such a noise as was never heard in the study before. But the same spirit which influenced the whole house must have been brought to bear upon those noisy little creatures to keep them still and quiet when necessary, for they were never complained of, and they were never turned out of the study until the time came for giving them away and finding good homes for them. One kitten was kept, and, being a very exceptional cat, deserves to be specially mentioned. Being deaf, he had no name given him, but was called by the servants 'the master's cat,' in consequence of his devotion to him. He was always with his master, and used to follow him about the garden and sit with him while he was writing. One evening they were left together, the ladies of the house having gone to a ball in the neighbourhood. Charles Dickens was reading at a small table on which a lighted candle was placed, when suddenly the candle went out. He was much interested in his book, relighted the candle, gave a pat to the cat, who he noticed was looking up at him with a most pathetic expression, and went on with his reading. A few minutes afterwards, the light getting dim, he looked up and was in time to see Puss deliberately put out the candle with his paw, and then gaze again appealingly at his master. This second appeal was understood, and had the desired effect. The book was shut, and Puss was made a fuss with and amused till bed-time. His master was full of this anecdote when we all met in the morning.

During the summer months there was a constant succession of visitors at Gad's Hill, with picnics, long drives, and much happy holiday-making. At these picnics there was a frequent request to this lover of light and colour of '*Please* let us have the luncheon in the shade at any rate.' He came to his daughter one day and said he had 'a capital idea' about picnic luncheons. He wished each person to have his or her own ration neatly done up in one parcel, to consist of a mutton pie, a hard-boiled egg, a roll, a piece of butter, and a packet of salt. Of course this idea was faithfully carried out, but was not always the rule, as when the choice of food was put to the vote, it was found that many people cared neither for mutton-pie nor hard-boiled egg. But 'the capital idea' of separate rations was always followed as closely as possible.

Charles Dickens was a most delightful and genial host, had the power of putting the shyest people at ease with him at once, and had a charm in his manner peculiarly his own and quite indescribable. The charm was always there whether he was grave or gay, whether in his very funniest or in his most serious and earnest mood.

He was a strict master in the way of insisting upon everything being done perfectly and exactly as he desired, but, on the other hand, was most kind, just, and considerate.

His punctuality was a remarkable characteristic, and visitors used to wonder how it was that everything was done to the very minute, 'almost by clock-work,' as some of them would remark.

It is a common saying now in the family of some dear friends, where punctuality is not *quite* so well observed, 'What would Mr. Dickens have said to this?' or, 'Ah! my dear child, I wish you could have been at Gad's Hill to learn what punctuality means!'

Charles Dickens was very fond of music, and not only of classical music. He loved national airs, old tunes, songs, and ballads, and was easily moved by anything pathetic in a song or tune, and was never tired of hearing his special favourites sung or played. He used to like to have music of an evening, and duets used to be played for hours together, while he would read or walk up and down the room. A member of his family was singing a ballad one evening while he was apparently deep in his book, when he suddenly got up, saying, 'You don't make enough of that word,' and he sat down by the piano, showed her the way in which he

wished it to be emphasized, and did not leave the instrument until it had been sung to his satisfaction. Whenever this song was sung, which it often was, as it became a favourite with him, he would always listen for that word, with his head a little on one side, as much as to say, 'I wonder if she will remember.'

There was a large meadow at the back of the garden in which, during the summer-time, many cricket matches were held. Although never playing himself, he delighted in the game, and would sit in his tent, keeping score for one side, the whole day long. He never took to croquet; but had lawn-tennis been played in the Gad's Hill days, he would certainly have enjoyed it. He liked American bowls, at which he used constantly to play with his male guests. For one of his 'improvements' he had turned a waste piece of land into a croquet-ground and bowling-green.

In the meadow he used to practise many of his 'readings;' and any stranger passing down the lane and seeing him gesticulating and hearing him talking, laughing, and sometimes it may be weeping, must surely have thought him out of his mind! The getting up of these 'readings' gave him an immense amount of labour and fatigue, and the sorrowful parts tried him greatly. For instance, in the reading of 'Little Dombey,' it was hard work for him so to steel his heart as to be able to read the death without breaking down or displaying too much emotion. He often told how much he suffered over this story, and how it would have been impossible for him to have gone through with it had he not kept constantly before his eyes the picture of his own Plorn alive and strong and well.

His great neatness and tidiness have already been alluded to, as also his wonderful sense of order. The first thing he did every morning, before going to work, was to make a complete circuit of the garden, and then to go over the whole house, to see that everything was in its place. And this was also the first thing he did upon his return home, after long absence. A more thoroughly orderly nature never existed. And it must have been through this gift of order that he was enabled to make time—notwithstanding any amount of work—to give to the minutest household details. Before a dinner-party the *menu* was always submitted to him for approval, and he always made a neat little plan of the table, with the names of the guests marked in their respective places, and a list of 'who was to take in who' to dinner, and had

constantly some 'bright idea' or other as to the arrangement of the table or the rooms.

Among his many attributes, that of a doctor must not be forgotten. He was invaluable in a sick room, or in any sudden emergency; always quiet, always cheerful, always useful and skilful, always doing the right thing, so that his very presence seemed to bring comfort and help. From his children's earliest days his visits, during any time of sickness, were eagerly longed for and believed in, as doing more good than those even of the doctor himself. He had a curiously magnetic and sympathetic hand, and his touch was wonderfully soothing and quieting. As a mesmerist he possessed great power, which he used, most successfully, in many cases of great pain and distress. He had a strong aversion to saying good-bye, and would do anything he possibly could to avoid going through the ordeal. This feeling must have been natural to him, for as early as the 'Old Curiosity Shop' he writes: 'Why is it we can better bear to part in spirit than in body, and while we have the fortitude to bid farewell have not the nerve to say it? On the eve of long voyages, or an absence of many years, friends who are tenderly attached will separate with the usual look, the usual pressure of the hand, planning one final interview for the morrow, while each well knows that it is but a feint to save the pain of uttering that one word, and that the meeting will never be! Should possibilities be worse to bear than certainties?' So all who love him, and who know the painful dislike he had to that word, are thankful that *he* was spared the agony of that last, long Farewell.

Almost the pleasantest times at Gad's Hill were the winter gatherings for Christmas and the New Year, when the house was more than full, and the bachelors of the party had to be 'put up' in the village. At these times Charles Dickens was at his gayest and brightest, and the days passed cheerily and merrily away. He was great at games, and many of the evenings were spent in playing at Yes and No, Proverbs, Russian Scandal, Crambo, Dumb Crambo—in this he was most exquisitely funny—and a game of Memory, which he particularly liked.

The New Year was always welcomed with all honours. Just before twelve o'clock everybody would assemble in the hall, and he would open the door and stand in the entrance, watch in hand—how many of his friends must remember him thus, and think lovingly of the picture!—as he waited, with a half-smile

on his attentive face, for the bells to chime out the New Year. Then his voice would break the silence with 'A Happy New Year to us all.' For many minutes there would be much embracing, hand-shaking, and good-wishing; and the servants would all come up and get a hearty shake of the hand from the beloved 'master.' Then hot spiced wine would be distributed, and good-health drunk all round. Sometimes there would be a country dance, in which the host delighted, and in which he insisted upon every one joining, and he never allowed the dancing—and real dancing it was too—to flag for an instant, but kept it up until even *he* was tired and out of breath, and had at last to clap his hands, and bring it to an end. His thorough enjoyment was most charming to witness, and seemed to infect every one present.

One New Year's Day at breakfast, he proposed that we should act some charades, in dumb show, that evening. This proposal being met with enthusiasm, the idea was put into train at once. The different parts were assigned, dresses were discussed, 'properties' were collected, and rehearsing went on the whole day long. As the home visitors were all to take part in the charades, invitations had to be sent to the more intimate neighbours to make an audience, an impromptu supper had to be arranged for, and the day was one of continual bustle and excitement, and the rehearsals were the greatest fun imaginable. A dear old friend volunteered to undertake the music, and he played delightfully all through the acting. These charades made one of the pleasantest and most successful of New Year's evenings spent at Gad's Hill.

But there were not only grown-up guests invited to the pretty cheerful home. In a letter to a friend Charles Dickens writes: 'Another generation begins to peep above the table. I once used to think what a horrible thing it was to be a grandfather. Finding that the calamity falls upon me without my perceiving any other change in myself, I bear it like a man.' But as he so disliked the name of grandfather as applied to himself, those grandchildren were taught by him to call him 'Venerables.' And to this day some of them still speak of him by this self-invented name.

Now there is another and younger family who never knew 'Venerables,' but have been all taught to know his likeness, and taught to know his books by the pictures in them, as soon as they can be taught anything, and whose baby hands lay bright flowers

upon the stone in Westminster Abbey, every June 9 and every Christmas Eve. For in remembrance of his love for all that is gay in colour, none but the brightest flowers, and also some of the gorgeous American leaves, sent by a friend for the purpose, are laid upon the grave, making that one spot in the midst of the vast and solemn building bright and beautiful.

In a letter to Plorn before his departure for Australia, Charles Dickens writes: 'I hope you will always be able to say in after life, that you had a kind father.' And to this hope, each one of his children can answer with a loving, grateful heart, that so it was.

REMINISCENCES OF FOO-CHOW.

During a recent visit to Foo-chow I had the good fortune to be repeatedly invited to the houses of some of its wealthy citizens, and thus obtained interesting glimpses of Chinese home life; such glimpses at least as a traveller visiting Britain might gain in the course of a few morning calls and carefully arranged dinner-parties.

Our first visit was by appointment to luncheon with the wife of an exceedingly wealthy mandarin, who, being also a merchant, has mixed a good deal with the foreign community, and so has got over the national prejudice against outer barbarians. Having been warned that gay garments were much appreciated, we donned our best evening dresses and such jewels as we had with us, and, thus adorned, took our places in wicker arm-chairs slung on bamboos, and each borne by four strong Chinamen clothed in the invariable purplish blue cotton, and wearing large straw hats.

Thus we were carried from the foreign settlement on the green hills of the Isle of Nantai (formed by the divided streams of the river Min) and through the poor streets which lie along the river banks—very wretched slums, inhabited by the poorest of the working population, where rows of small shops are crowded together, and painfully dirty. Suddenly we found ourselves halting at a great door, passing through which we entered a large courtyard leading into a succession of open courts and airy halls lavishly decorated with fine carved wood and much gilding, and furnished with handsome black wood carving from Canton, beautifully embroidered scarlet draperies, and lamps of fine coloured glass adorned with silken hangings. In the great hall a conspicuous place was occupied by the domestic altar, at which the ladies of the family daily offered the accustomed ancestral worship. The master of the house was himself a most devout and practical Christian, but he wisely deemed it best to allow his womenfolk perfect liberty of conscience—a wisdom which ere long resulted in their following in his footsteps.

The ladies had already got over the national prejudice in favour of the total seclusion of women, and although we were accompanied by gentlemen, our pretty hostess came forward to receive

us with the utmost courtesy and heartiness, accompanied by her little adopted son (adopted according to common Chinese custom, when there seems no probability of a woman having sons of her own to perform ancestral rites on the death of the parents). We were then introduced to various sons of our host by a previous marriage, and to their young wives. All were exquisitely dressed in the finest raiment of needlework, with elaborately embroidered skirts arranged in deep kilt plaits, and all were distinguished by the smallness of their poor compressed feet and tiny shoes barely three inches in length.

They took us through many pretty rooms, all carpeted. We were struck with some of the bedroom arrangements, very beautiful four-post bedsteads of finely carved wood being enclosed within handsome wooden screens, furnished with all conveniences for washing and hair-dressing. Notwithstanding the beauty of the carving, the beds were draped with richly embroidered hangings, and piles of soft, handsome quilts lay folded up ready for use.

Passing through various reception-rooms for Chinese guests, we were conducted to one prepared for foreigners, all very handsome and in good taste, but so very British that we were glad when 'tiffin' was announced and we were conducted to a luxurious dining-room, and sat down to what proved an excellent but very lengthy dinner in twenty-five courses! This, however, was nothing remarkable, as a really elaborate dinner sometimes consists of forty courses and a hundred dishes, and lasts for about four hours, the guests being expected to taste every dish as it is handed round, washing it down with innumerable cups of hot rice wine, and concluding with a large bowl of plain boiled rice, just to correct any previous indiscretion in the way of rich soups or incongruous mixtures!

On the present occasion everything was exquisitely refined, and of such unquestionable cleanliness that the curiosity of tasting new dishes might be indulged without alloy. My host, who had placed me on his left hand, which he carefully explained to be the Chinese post of honour, had desired that, as each dish was brought in, an attendant should provide me with a neat little red ticket whereon was inscribed its name both in English and Chinese; so I was able duly to study the respective merits of bird's-nest soup with doves' eggs, sharks' fins, mushroom soup, and duck soup in which floated delicate small pieces of bamboo somewhat resembling asparagus. Portions of all these were brought to each guest in

dainty little porcelain bowls. Then came bêche-de-mer soup, *alias* sea-slugs, which does not sound nice, but which really is like calf's head. Then there were sweet soups and small stews and ragouts of every conceivable meat except beef, which is never seen at a Chinese table, oxen being accounted too valuable to the farmer to be consigned to the butcher. As to cat, rat, and dog, those curious in such matters may procure them at restaurants in the city; but I understand that they do not grace the festivals of Chinese gentry. What with turtle soup, soup of ducks' tongues, maccaroni, fairy rice, skins of pig's mouth, dragon whisker, vegetables, &c., we found an ample succession of gastronomical interests. No bread is eaten, but all manner of delicate little preserved fruits and pickles are brought to each guest on tiny silver plates to play with between the courses.

One of the greatest delicacies provided for us were ducks' eggs, hard boiled, quite black, and of incalculable age—antediluvian perhaps, as nothing is considered respectably old in China unless it dates back some thousand years. But, joking apart, it appears that the value of these black eggs really increases with their age. The Chinese epicure discriminates between the eggs of successive decades, treating his most honoured guests to the oldest and most costly, just as the owner of a good cellar in Britain brings forth his choicest old wines. The charm of a lightly-boiled fresh egg is quite unknown to the Celestial palate, which only recognises eggs when hard boiled, and much prefers them in advanced age. For ordinary use, and especially as a light diet for invalids, eggs are simply preserved by being steeped in salt water mixed with either soot or red clay, in which they are baked when required. But the truly refined process is to prepare a solution of wood ashes, lime, and salt, mixed with water in which some aromatic plant has been boiled. This paste is run into a tub, and the newly-laid eggs are therein embedded in layers. The tub is hermetically sealed, and at the end of forty days the eggs are considered fit for use, but at the end of forty years they will be still better. They become black throughout, owing, I suppose, to the action of the lime; but the white becomes gelatinous, and the whole tastes rather like a plover's egg.

In deference to our possible difficulties with chop-sticks we were each supplied with lovely silver spoons of the regular Chinese form, very short, with thick handles. Hot rice-wine (or sam-shu) was freely served in beautiful little silver cups engraven with

characters signifying good-luck. Hot almond tea, peach tea, and various other decoctions were also passed round at intervals, so that ere the close of the entertainment we had tasted a most wonderful variety of things new and old.

But what was really delightful was the kindly way in which each member of this patriarchal family did his or her share to make our visit agreeable and interesting, and all my recollections of our meetings on this and several subsequent occasions are of the pleasantest character.

Our next visit was to the house of another very wealthy mandarin, whose womenkind had as yet had little or no intercourse with foreigners. This home is in the heart of the great city itself; so, leaving the island of Nantai, we crossed the river Min by a very fine bridge, eight hundred years old, built of enormous slabs of granite, and thereby entered the densely-crowded town which forms the suburbs of the great walled city of Foo-chow. There seemed no end to the twists and turns of the long and foully dirty streets through which we were carried, and where the extraordinary variety of bad smells makes the possession of a nose a serious drawback. At last we reached a high blank wall forming one side of a dingy street, and on being admitted within its ponderous wooden gates, we found ourselves in the courtyard of a purely Chinese house.

The sudden change from the dirt and squalor and dense population of the streets to the large enclosure with luxurious houses and pleasure-grounds which form a sort of patriarchal encampment for the family of a wealthy great man, is most startling. Our host came to receive us in the outer court, where we left our chairs and coolies, and then passed the kitchen and crossed another court, when we reached the great reception-hall, decorated with much beautifully carved, very open woodwork, and furnished with the usual handsome small tables and ponderous chairs of polished black wood, with slabs of marble forming the seat and back. In honour of our expected visit, seats, divans, tables, and walls were decorated with the richly embroidered scarlet cloth covers which are always produced on ceremonious occasions.

The weather being hot, we fully appreciated the cool shade of a small dark room in which we were invited to sit awhile ere being conducted to the presence of the ladies. Tea was, of course, brought in in the usual small covered cups without saucers; the use of the cover is to prevent the leaves from entering the mouth

in drinking, as the correct way to make tea is to put a pinch of leaves in each cup and pour on boiling water, thus making every cupful separately. Of course sugar or milk is never used. On the little tables were set the invariable plates of sweetmeats and small cakes.

But the quaintest addition to these are the little plates of melon-seeds, which all the Chinese delight in picking open and nibbling, in accordance with a Chinese proverb which expresses the satisfaction of always having something in the mouth. In this respect the race are like squirrels, except that rich men's long-pointed nails do the work even more effectually than teeth. In every idle moment the whole population devotes itself to cracking melon-seeds. As they walk in the streets or at the social chat, to beguile the tedium of a journey or to lighten the cares of business, the infallible remedy is melon-seeds. Even at the theatres the spectators are provided with little plates of water-melon seeds, and an attendant walks about with a large basket to replenish them again and again, so that the sound of the cracking seeds is heard incessantly, and the floor is invariably strewn with them. They are offered for sale everywhere. In the districts where melons grow abundantly the refreshing fruits are freely offered to all comers on condition of their saving and restoring the seeds. These are collected in great bales as articles of commerce, and form the chief cargo of many junks on the rivers. Small children, busy merchants, great mandarins delight in them. The poorest coolie, notwithstanding the disadvantage of his short nails, contrives to spare a few cash for the purchase of this luxury. I am told that this curious passion for melon-seeds prevails throughout the Empire, and that the four hundred millions of Chinamen are all insatiable for these dainties.

One entertainment here provided for us was a musical-box, made in Hong-kong, which played all the favourite purely Chinese airs, and we were astonished to find that several struck us as really pretty. As a general rule Chinese music is so terribly loud, and is played by so many utterly discordant instruments of various sorts, that the name only suggests ear-torture, castanets and drums utterly drowning whatever melody may be produced by guitars, flutes, and violins, which are supposed to play in unison with shrill human voices; but as neither voices nor instruments are ever strictly in tune, the combination is never harmonious, whether heard in theatres, or temples, or shrieked by street musicians.

Therefore to hear a real Chinese air rendered on a musical-box with no such additions was a most unusual treat.

When we had sat the orthodox time in the cool recess of the great hall, we were taken into another room, where we found our host's two sons studying with their Chinese tutor. They were nice, well-mannered lads, with some knowledge of English. The eldest, who looked about sixteen, was married, and we found his young bride with her mother-in-law, when at length our host conducted us to the ladies' quarters. Both were painfully shy, and shrank back awkwardly into a dark corner, not attempting to greet us with the ordinary elaborate forms required by Chinese courtesy. They just knew enough of foreign customs to know that foreigners dispense with forms, and so they did not know how to act. At the bidding of the husband we had to do the correct thing, and examined their wonderfully dressed and jewelled hair, their exquisitely embroidered clothes, and their dainty shoes two inches long, which covered the poor little deformities which are forced to do duty as feet. Unfortunately we were not accompanied by a female interpreter, and our host positively declined to assume that duty, and retired, leaving us alone with the ladies, when we contrived to induce them to sit beside us, which they did like irresponsive mutes. Both ladies, being Canton women, were highly rouged, the paint carried right above the eyes. The younger lady was very brightly coloured, but the elder had subdued the paint with powder. Attendants, whose larger feet enable them not only to walk themselves, but also to carry their helpless, tottering mistresses, brought for our inspection a tray full of jewels, consisting chiefly of fine bright green jade and very good pearls, also dainty ornaments and gorgeous headgear of brilliant kingfishers' feathers, so set in gold as to resemble the brightest and most costly enamel.

Of course we admired everything, but the position was oppressively dull, and we took leave as soon as we could venture to do so with courtesy, and rejoined the gentlemen. Our host then exhibited piles of the ladies' dresses, all plaited in kilt folds—dresses of silk or of satin of every shade of texture, for hot weather or cold, but all most elaborately embroidered. He told us the price he had paid for each article, and also how vast a sum he had expended on his son's marriage-feast, and what an immense number of tables had then been spread. With special delight he related how, when he had left China on a visit to some foreign country, the custom-house officers would not believe that his

multitudinous changes of raiment could all be his own wardrobe, and were not intended for sale.

Somewhat overpowered by all this gorgeous apparel, we made our ceremonious farewells, our host escorting us to our chairs at the outer court, and then the great doors closed behind us and we were once more in the filthy streets, and surrounded by wretchedly poor people and clamorous beggars. Yet as we were carried along we caught glimpses of strangely picturesque scenes, and ere we neared the river the shades of evening were closing in, and the shops had hung up quaint silk and horn or paper lamps of many colours. These, octagonal, globular, or oval, white or crimson, are suspended from the overhanging balconies, and shine on tall scarlet or green signboards, covered with strange gilt characters. Then were revealed scenes of religious or domestic life in dimly-lighted interiors—here a supper-party busy with their chop-sticks, devouring bowls of rice with savoury accompaniments, there the house-master renewing the offerings of food and flowers on the family altar, and lighting the tapers and the incense-sticks for the evening sacrifice. Then a group of poorer shops, where the industrious toilers were still busy at their trade, making curious garments or strange shoes, wonderful theatrical properties for the actors, glittering crowns and weapons, feather head-dresses for ladies, and things, to us incomprehensible, for the use of the temples.

Here and there a faint sickly smell of opium floated out from some dim den, where we knew that the wretched, bloodless-looking victims of the evil drug were enjoying their dearly-bought intoxication. A pleasanter sight and smell is that of the locomotive oven of the street cook, who, with a whole array of pots and pans, prepares savoury stews of undefined pieces of flesh, bowls of soup and savoury pies, all of which are highly appreciated by the passers-by, who, on payment of some infinitesimal coin, receive a bowl of something that really smells quite appetising, which they devour then and there with infinite relish. All this, and a multitude of kindred scenes, are in the open street, lighted only by the aforesaid dim lamps, and by the smaller, globular paper lanterns which are carried by almost every wayfarer slung from a wooden handle.

Various expeditions had already familiarised us with these streets, but more especially with those within the walled city, in the neighbourhood of some of the great temples, where we had

established friendly relations with priests of divers creeds, who did the honours of their very curious, though by no means cleanly, shrines. We attended elaborate ritualistic services in Buddhist temples, and became connoisseurs in vestments and images, and especially admired one great block of polished black limestone, twelve feet in height by five in width and one and a half in thickness, which is covered all over with beautifully-carved dragons. It occupies a place of honour in an inner shrine, where it rests on a great pedestal. Another point of interest is a very fine Tauist temple, with about thirty huge monolithic pillars of granite, where, in singular contrast to the smooth-faced, shaven gilt images in Buddha's temples, or to his own, with the invariable curiously curly hair, there are huge gilt images with very long black moustaches, and in the side court a series of gilt images like Tartar mandarins, mounted on gilt horses and escorted by gilt servants. This is one of the great military temples for the Tartar soldiery; the chief priests were arrayed in robes of green satin, and their long hair was plaited and rolled up. The Buddhist priests are, of course, all shaven, and their yellow robes are only varied by occasional grey robes of the inferior orders, or enlivened by a rose-coloured stole.

In one of the side chapels of the great Tauist temple we noticed a goddess who apparently is the guardian of sight, and a very careless one she must be, judging from the amount of blindness we see due to neglected ophthalmia. But none the less do her votaries bring to her shrine votive offerings of spectacles—small paper spectacles from the very poor, and enormous ones of calico from richer sufferers; Chinese spectacles are at all times very large and cumbersome objects.

Another of these side chapels is occupied by the goddess Kum-Fa, the patroness of mothers, devoutly worshipped by all women and girls. She is surrounded by a great array of celestial nurses, each tending a young baby, and to each is assigned some special function in the care of every infant, either before or after its birth. All these must be propitiated by women who hope to become mothers, while those whose little ones are sick may buy packets of tea in the temple and offer them to the goddess, who graciously permits the mother to take back the said tea, which, having been passed through the fumes of the sacred incense, is administered to the sick child as a consecrated and healing drink.

Passing on through the city, we visited various temples to the

honour of Mencius and other sages, and did homage to the memory of Confucius in the grand temple dedicated to his memory, wherein gilded tablets inscribed with his name, and those of the most noted of his three thousand disciples, are the objects of devout reverence. The Confucian temples are, in fact, ancestral halls consecrated to the dead, and they are invariably chillingly bare and cold and solemn. Here even the great brazier, candlesticks, and vases are of solid granite on a granite altar, and granite pillars support the heavy roof. The worshippers who daily enter the great temple prostrate themselves in mute homage, no words of prayer or definite expression of thought being required save on special occasions. A gentleman who escorted us described a very solemn service which is held in presence of the Confucian tablet twice a year, at dead of night, when all the officials of the city are expected to be present, kneeling in the great court, each on his appointed square of the stone pavement, to adore Confucius—that wearisome sage whose fossilised wisdom has petrified all original thought throughout the vast empire, from his time, six centuries before Christ, even to this present hour. At these great festivals an offering must be laid before the altar, which includes every available animal—pig, goat, sheep, fowl, duck, &c.—but its principal feature is a whole cow, which has been carefully shaved and scraped till it is as hairless as a Chinaman's face.[1] On the strength of this propitiatory offering to the learned dead, the living pray for prosperity in the coming season.

On this occasion all the mandarins and literati are present, for even the most 'advanced' thinkers who despise all the foolish ceremonial and idolatries of the Buddhist and Tauist religions, profess the deepest veneration for the wisdom of Confucius, or, as they would say, 'the most holy, ancient sage Koong-foo-tsze,' and for the seventy-two sages whose tablets are ranged to the right hand and the left of that of their great master. So the literati condescend to eat their share of the offerings as at a funeral feast; for in very truth the reverence accorded to Confucius is simply a development of the ancestral worship which was the aboriginal religion of the land, and is the one real religion of China at the present

[1] No Chinaman presumes to allow his beard, whiskers, or moustaches to grow till he is well advanced in years. To do so is a privilege of age, and therefore marks a man who is entitled to some consideration. I have seen a troublesome crowd successfully dispersed by the intervention of a venerable bystander, whose sympathy was enlisted by an appeal founded on the length of his beard and moustaches!

day—the one all-pervading influence acknowledged by all, to whatever other religious body they may nominally belong. In some mysterious way the service of the dead blends itself with that incomprehensible Fungshui which permeates every action and condition of Chinese life, and to which everything good or bad is attributed.

Of our many interesting expeditions, one was right across the Tartar city or military quarter, which is enclosed by venerable and mighty walls of grey stone, with strong gateways at certain points, which, of course, have been decided with special relation to all lucky influences. We made for the Great North Gate, a two-storied building commanding a splendid widespread view of the city, the plain, the windings of the river, and the great range of encircling mountains. Close by the gate stand seven large water-jars of stone, each enclosed by a stone railing. It is believed that so long as there is water in these jars, there will be no fires in the city of Foo-chow; therefore it is the duty of a special official to see that in the driest summer the water is never suffered to dry up.

The Dragon who regulates all matters relating to fire and water is certainly very strangely influenced. In Canton some years ago there was a terrible drought, which defied all efforts of priests and soothsayers. Prayers and fasting, public humiliation, and prolonged religious services were all in vain, till at length a magician revealed to the officials that the one action which would ensure the favour of the Dragon King was that the Great South Gate of the city should be closed, and water-tubs filled to the brim deposited in the gateway. In these tubs frogs were to be placed, and the geomancer promised that rain should be granted in answer to their croaking. The croaking was considerably increased by the amount of annoyance to which the luckless frogs were subjected by the small boys of the city, and, by a singular coincidence, the much-desired rain soon followed!

Amongst the many minor points of curious interest which arrested my notice while slowly wandering on foot through many of the intricate streets of the city, there was one of which I could obtain no solution, though my companion was well versed in many details of Chinese custom—namely, that on March 26 (which happened to be a fortnight before Easter) a small bunch of a weed, which appeared to me identical with what we call shepherd's purse, was bound with a bit of red rag, and nailed on to the upright posts of every window and doorway. When in Ningpo a few days later, I was told that always, at the same time as Easter,

all the people nail a branch of willow on their doors, because once, when the city was besieged, the general, having a brother living there, gave him this sign, which the soldiers were commanded to respect. The brother, not caring to be saved alone, instructed all his friends and kinsmen to adopt this badge, and many other citizens followed their example without understanding why, and thus many escaped massacre. Whatever may have really been the origin of this custom, the season at which it is observed irresistibly suggests that bunch of hyssop (or small herb) dipped in blood, wherewith the lintel and side-posts of every Israelitish door were to be stricken, that

The Angel of Death beholding the sign, might pass over.

Another custom which (albeit a universal feature of the spring festival in all lands) is naturally associated in our minds with Eastertide is that of giving and eating hard-boiled dyed eggs. I believe that throughout China this is done as a matter of family rejoicing when a child is born or on the recurrence of its birthday; but only at this special season did I observe the quantities of red eggs offered for sale in the streets, and of others most elaborately painted with mythological subjects. I saw some specially artistic ones which had been purchased at Ningpo, and I endeavoured when there to procure some more, but, though my visit was very soon after Easter, not one was to be obtained, and the egg merchants were nowise disposed to procure such objects out of the proper season, which appeared to be about Easter Monday, on which day there was great 'Joss Pigeon' (*i.e.* God's business) going on at Foo-chow, and all the junks were adorned with huge flags and streamers, especially flags displaying the Green Dragon. But not three weeks later, on May 5, the whole population of Ningpo seemed to be feasting on hard-boiled eggs, with a view to averting headache in the ensuing twelvemonth—an appeal to luck akin to our custom of eating Christmas pies before the orthodox day.

As I have already remarked, hard-boiled eggs which have been preserved in salt are greatly esteemed as a light diet for sick folk; but these, it must be confessed, are not generally tended with much care or wisdom—at least not according to European ideas.

Among the various means whereby the Red Barbarians strive to bridge over the chasm which separates them from the Chinese population, none have been so effective or are so full of promise of ever-increasing usefulness as the work of the Medical Mission,

which so unmistakably proves to the people the kindly intentions of those who devote their lives to this labour of love.[1] The branch of this great work which to me was especially interesting was that directed to the women of Foo-chow, which has already proved the passport to many a home. I confess to having been slightly startled when, a few days after my arrival, my hostess having mentioned that Dr. Trask and Dr. Sparr were coming to breakfast, I found that these professional titles described two pleasant kindly American ladies, one being a bright, clever young woman barely twenty-five years of age! With true kindness to the stranger, they had brought me a lovely and most fragrant branch of the richest pumelo, which is a kind of large orange-blossom, as a specimen of Foo-chow cultivation. The elder lady was already a proficient in Chinese, and was able to visit her patients in their own homes. Her companion was doing brave battle with the agonies of this excruciating language, and until it was mastered had to confine her care to the charge of the dispensary and nursing in the hospital.

But it so happened that just at this time there were in the foreign settlement several serious cases of small-pox, which, for some reason, the regular doctors were unable to attend, so the friends of the patients sent to entreat the medical aid of this lady (rather a delicate matter, as the members of the mission are not allowed to take a fee from any patient except the wealthier Chinese). The brave lady consented to attend the sufferers, who happily rewarded her care by making excellent recoveries. Her safeguards were simple. Every morning she clothed herself in an india-rubber suit, to wear while in the infected houses, returning home to bathe, apply sundry disinfectants, and dress in clean calico ere going to her regular work in the dispensary. At nights she took turns with her medical companion to sit up all night when necessary, watching any anxious case in

[1] The advantages of sending out carefully trained medical women in connection with Christian missions have been fully proved. For women endowed with the talents and capacities for such work (and it is one which calls for very varied talents of a really high order) it would be difficult to conceive a more noble career. A society has recently been formed which provides a House of Residence for Missionary Students at the London School of Medicine for Women, during a course of four years' training, after which it is purposed to draft them to mission stations in all parts of the world in connection with the churches to which they respectively belong. Women who are inclined to take part in such work can obtain full particulars as to terms of admission and fees from Mrs. Meredith, Women's Medical Mission House, 2, Mecklenburgh Street, London, s.w.

their hospital for Chinese women. In the few months previous to my visit, the senior doctor had to perform about sixty surgical operations, some of which were very difficult cases. She invited us to come and see the said hospital—a large, clean, airy room—where every possible care was taken for the comfort of the inmates, some of whom had very bright, intelligent faces, though worn with suffering, and all seemed truly grateful for the loving care bestowed on them. One case was peculiarly distressing. It was that of a poor girl, so wasted with disease that it had been necessary to amputate both her feet. But the good doctors looked on her with especial satisfaction. They hoped soon to supply her with American feet, which should be far more serviceable than the tottering 'lily feet' of the noblest lady in the city; and they had also good hope that she would join the mission and become a teacher. By the latest accounts I hear that these hopes have been in a great measure realised, and that she has recently made a very happy marriage.

I was subsequently taken to visit some of the native charities which are to be found in most large Chinese cities, and which are intended to alleviate all manner of woes, but, unfortunately, though perhaps well designed in the first instance, all fall very far short in practical usefulness, and the most casual observer cannot fail to be struck with the dirt and mismanagement of all such institutions. There are homes for old women and homes for old men, which are the dreariest of almshouses; rows of dismal cells being arranged in the form of a quadrangle divided into streets, and enclosed by a high wall. Here persons who have attained extreme old age are provided with food and a roof, an altar before which to offer worship to the guardian idol, and some sort of medical care. Of the medicines administered, we formed some notion on being informed that one of the industries of the Foo-chow beggars is the rearing of snakes, which are purchased by the druggists and boiled down for medical use (just as in the old Gaelic legends! [1]).

In a list of 442 Chinese medicines given in one of the standard medical works translated by Dr. Hobson, of the London Medical Mission, I find such curious items as 'dried red spotted lizard, silkworm moth, parasite of mulberry trees, asses' glue, tops of hartshorn and birds' nests, black and white lead, stalactite, asbĕstos, tortoiseshell, human milk, glue from stag's horn and

[1] See *In the Hebrides.* By C. F. Gordon Cumming. Chatto & Windus.

bones, ferns,' all recommended as tonics; burnt straw, oyster-shell, gold and silver leaf, iron filings, and the bones and tusks of dragons are stated to be astringent.

The so-called dragon's bones, by the way, are the fossil remains of the Megatherium and other extinct animals which are found in various places, and which our own Anglo-Saxon ancestors esteemed so highly for medicinal purposes; indeed, any one acquainted with the leechdoms of our own forefathers might suppose, in glancing over these Chinese prescriptions, that he was reading the medical lore of Britain until the eighteenth century! There is the identical use of ingredients selected, apparently, solely on account of their loathsomeness.

Nor are these the worst. There are certain diseases which the physicians declare to be incurable save by a decoction of which the principal ingredient is warm human flesh cut from the arm or thigh of a living son or daughter of the patient! To supply this piece of flesh is (naturally) esteemed one of the noblest acts of filial devotion, and there are numerous instances on record in quite recent years in which this generous offering has been made to save the life of a parent, and even of a mother-in-law! A case which was held up for special commendation in the Official Gazette of Pekin in 1870, was that of a young girl who had actually tried herself to cut the flesh from her thigh to save the life of her mother, but, finding her courage fail, she had cut off two joints of her finger, and dropped the flesh into the medicine, which happily proved equally efficacious, 'for,' says the Official Gazette, 'this act of filial piety *of course* had its reward in the immediate recovery of the mother.' This case called forth 'boundless laudations' from the Governor-General of the province of Kiang-si, who begged that the Emperor would bestow 'some exemplary reward on the child, such as the erection of a great triumphal arch of carved stone, to commemorate the act.'

This being the class of medicine which is administered to patients, it is evident that, although a sort of hospital is provided for the sick, the occasional cures must be attributed rather to accident than to scientific skill.

But, in truth, the Chinese have little sympathy with bodily anguish, and are by no means sure how far the care of such sufferers, or making provision for their wants and endeavouring to alleviate their pain, may be pleasing to the gods, or accounted an act of merit. For, like the Jews, who asked, '*Did this man*

sin, or his parents, *that he was born blind?*' they look upon all grievous bodily or mental affliction as the just punishment for some heinous offence committed in a previous state of existence.

Blindness, therefore, which is fearfully common, receives the smallest meed of pity. There is, indeed, an asylum provided for a certain number of sufferers, but the dole of food which accompanies the right to a wretched roof is so very small that it is absolutely necessary to supplement it by begging; consequently the inmates go about in companies of about half a dozen, walking single file, each man guided by the man in front of him, while the leader feels his way along the street with his stick. It is a most literal case of the blind leading the blind. Occasionally they stop and yell frightful songs in chorus, beating small gongs as an accompaniment. Of course the deafened bystanders soon contribute infinitesimal coins to induce them to pass on; but the shopkeepers wait awhile, knowing that the sooner one lot depart, the sooner will their successors arrive.

Amongst other native charities we visited the Foundling Hospital, where girl infants who have been abandoned by their unnatural mothers are carried, should they be found alive. Such infanticide is not deemed a crime, and is not blamed by public opinion; nevertheless foreign influence has so far modified the views of the upper classes that various semi-official proclamations have been issued strongly condemning the practice, and pointing out that, as it must be displeasing to the gods, it must tend to defeat the object in view—namely, obtaining the Heaven-granted gift of sons to perform the rites of ancestral sacrifice and worship. This hospital is built on the same plan as the others—rows of mean, dirty, damp cells, where wretchedly poor women are established as wet nurses, each receiving charge of a couple of the poor starved babies; some, indeed, are expected to take care of three, and although such are allowed a dole of flour and water to supplement the deficient supply of nourishment, it is needless to say that the miserable children are horribly neglected, and their ceaseless pitiful wailing proclaims their infant miseries. Of course the death-rate is enormous, and about a coolie-load per diem of dead babies is carried forth from the hospital to receive uncoffined and unrecognised burial. Never was there a more practical illustration of the survival of the fittest! Such babies as survive ten months of this treatment are considered well worth rearing, and are purchased by childless couples who want to rear a servant to

tend their old age, or else by provident parents who thus cheaply provide wives for their sons—at least such are the ostensible reasons assigned to render the purchase legitimate. Even supernumerary sons are occasionally consigned to this hospital, whence they are probably removed by sonless couples who want to adopt an heir to offer sacrifice at their ancestral altar.

As regards other forms of native charity, we heard of clothing-clubs, soup-kitchens, distributions of rice, and especially of the presentation of coffins to the temples, to be awarded by the priests to the most deserving poor. This last is a very favourite way of accumulating merit, and one which is immensely appreciated, as the most precious gift which filial piety can bestow on aged parents are the four stout 'longevity boards,' which may lie by and season until the hour when they shall be fashioned into the heavy coffin which is so truly respectable!

As to the various charities on behalf of the destitute dead (beggars and others whose relations, if they have any, are too poor to offer the sacrifices necessary to their comfort in the other world), these are numberless, and involve heavy expenditure at stated periods. The sum expended in self-defence on the propitiation of the dead throughout the whole Chinese Empire is literally scarcely credible until its statistics are carefully examined. It is estimated that a sum equal to no less than 32,000,000*l.* (thirty-two millions sterling!) is thus annually spent, chiefly on priestly services and burnt-offerings. This, of course, includes the ancestral expenditure of all the 450,000,000 inhabitants of the Great Empire.

But our interest on the present occasion lay rather with the living than the dead; so, after visiting some of these very saddening native institutes, we were gladdened by some glimpses of the work in the great city of the English and American Missions—the clean airy schools and eager intelligent faces of large classes of bright-looking boys and girls, whose interest in their work and personal affection to their teachers compensate the latter for many vexatious worries thrown in their way by some of the jealous 'small gentry.' We had glimpses, too, of other innumerable subjects of interest; but on all our visits to the city we had to hurry away so as to pass the great gates of the city ere sundown, when the gates are locked and the keys are carried to some high official, so that ingress and egress are alike impossible between sunset and sunrise.

GO TO THE ANT.

In the market-place at Santa Fé, in Mexico, peasant women from the neighbouring villages bring in for sale trayfuls of living ants, each about as big and round as a large white currant, and each entirely filled with honey or grape-sugar, much appreciated by the ingenuous Mexican youth as an excellent substitute for Everton toffee. The method of eating them would hardly command the approbation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It is simple and primitive, but decidedly not humane. Ingenuous youth holds the ant by its head and shoulders, sucks out the honey with which the back part is absurdly distended, and throws away the empty body as a thing with which it has now no further sympathy. Maturer age buys the ants by the quart, presses out the honey through a muslin strainer, and manufactures it into a very sweet intoxicating drink, something like shandygaff, as I am credibly informed by bold persons who have ventured to experiment upon it, taken internally.

The curious insect which thus serves as an animated sweetmeat for the Mexican children is the honey-ant of the Garden of the Gods; and it affords a beautiful example of Mandeville's charming paradox that personal vices are public benefits—*vitia privata humana commoda.* The honey-ant is a greedy individual who has nevertheless nobly devoted himself for the good of the community by converting himself into a living honey-jar, from which all the other ants in his own nest may help themselves freely from time to time, as occasion demands. The tribe to which he belongs lives underground, in a dome-roofed vault, and only one particular caste among the workers, known as rotunds from their expansive girth, is told off for this special duty of storing honey within their own bodies. Clinging to the top of their nest, with their round, transparent abdomens hanging down loosely, mere globules of skin enclosing the pale amber-coloured honey, these Daniel Lamberts of the insect race look for all the world like clusters of the little American Delaware grapes, with an ant's legs and head stuck awkwardly on to the end instead of a stalk. They have, in fact, realised in everyday life the awful fate of Mr. Gilbert's discontented sugar-broker, who laid on flesh and 'adipose

deposit' until he became converted at last into a perfect rolling ball of globular humanity.

The manners of the honey-ant race are very simple. Most of the members of each community are active and roving in their dispositions, and show no tendency to undue distension of the nether extremities. They go out at night and collect nectar or honey-dew from the gall-insects on oak-trees; for the gall-insect, like love in the old Latin saw, is fruitful both in sweets and bitters, *melle et felle.* This nectar they then carry home, and give it to the rotunds or honey-bearers, who swallow it and store it in their round abdomen until they can hold no more, having stretched their skins literally to the very point of bursting. They pass their time, like the Fat Boy in 'Pickwick,' chiefly in sleeping, but they cling upside down meanwhile to the roof of their residence. When the workers in turn require a meal, they go up to the nearest honey-bearer and stroke her gently with their antennæ. The honey-bearer thereupon throws up her head and regurgitates a large drop of the amber liquid. ('Regurgitates' is a good word, which I borrow from Dr. McCook, of Philadelphia, the great authority upon honey-ants; and it saves an immense deal of trouble in looking about for a respectable periphrasis.) The workers feed upon the drops thus exuded, two or three at once often standing around the living honey-jar, and lapping nectar together from the lips of their devoted comrade. This may seem at first sight rather an unpleasant practice on the part of the ants; but, after all, how does it really differ from our own habit of eating honey which has been treated in very much the same unsophisticated manner by the domestic bee?

Worse things than these, however, Dr. McCook records to the discredit of the Colorado honey-ant. When he was opening some nests in the Garden of the Gods, he happened accidentally to knock down some of the rotunds, which straightway burst asunder in the middle, and scattered their store of honey on the floor of the nest. At once the other ants, tempted away from their instinctive task of carrying off the cocoons and young grubs, clustered around their unfortunate companion, like street boys around a broken molasses barrel, and instead of forming themselves forthwith into a volunteer ambulance company, proceeded immediately to lap up the honey from their dying brother. On the other hand, it must be said, to the credit of the race, that (unlike the members of Arctic expeditions) they never desecrate

the remains of the dead. When a honey-bearer dies at his post, a victim to his zeal for the common good, the workers carefully remove his cold corpse from the roof where it still clings, clip off the head and shoulders from the distended abdomen, and convey their deceased brother piecemeal, in two detachments, to the formican cemetery, undisturbed. If they chose, they might only bury the front half of their late relation, while they retained his remaining moiety as an available honey-bag: but from this cannibal proceeding ant-etiquette recoils in decent horror; and the amber globes are 'pulled up galleries, rolled along rooms, and bowled into the graveyard, along with the juiceless heads, legs, and other members.' Such fraternal conduct would be very creditable to the worker honey-ants, were it not for a horrid doubt insinuated by Dr. McCook that perhaps the insects don't know they could get at the honey by breaking up the body of their lamented relative. If so, their apparent disregard of utilitarian considerations may really be due not to their sentimentality but to their hopeless stupidity.

The reason why the ants have taken thus to storing honey in the living bodies of their own fellows is easy enough to understand. They want to lay up for the future, like prudent insects that they are; but they can't make wax, as the bees do, and they have not yet evolved the purely human art of pottery. Consequently—happy thought—why not tell off some of our number to act as jars on behalf of the others? Some of the community work by going out and gathering honey; they also serve who only stand and wait—who receive it from the workers, and keep it stored up in their own capacious indiarubber maws till further notice. So obvious is this plan for converting ants into animated honey-jars, that several different kinds of ants in different parts of the world, belonging to the most widely distinct families, have independently hit upon the very self-same device. Besides the Mexican species, there is a totally different Australian honey-ant, and another equally separate in Borneo and Singapore. This last kind does not store the honey in the hind part of the body, technically known as the abdomen, but in the middle division which naturalists call the thorax, where it forms a transparent bladder-like swelling, and makes the creature look as though it were suffering with an acute attack of dropsy. In any case, the life of a honey-bearer must be singularly uneventful, not to say dull and monotonous; but no doubt any small inconvenience in this respect

must be more than compensated for by the glorious consciousness that one is sacrificing one's own personal comfort for the common good of universal anthood. Perhaps, however, the ants have not yet reached the Positivist stage, and may be totally ignorant of the enthusiasm of formicity.

Equally curious are the habits and manners of the harvesting ants, the species which Solomon seems to have had specially in view when he advised his hearers to go to the ant—a piece of advice which I have also adopted as the title of the present article, though I by no means intend thereby to insinuate that the readers of this magazine ought properly to be classed as sluggards. These industrious little creatures abound in India: they are so small that it takes eight or ten of them to carry a single grain of wheat or barley; and yet they will patiently drag along their big burden for five hundred or a thousand yards to the door of their formicary. To prevent the grain from germinating, they bite off the embryo root—a piece of animal intelligence outdone by another species of ant, which actually allows the process of budding to begin, so as to produce sugar, as in malting. After the last thunderstorms of the monsoon the little proprietors bring up all the grain from their granaries to dry in the tropical sunshine. The quantity of grain stored up by the harvesting ants is often so large that the hair-splitting Jewish casuists of the Mishna have seriously discussed the question whether it belongs to the landowner or may lawfully be appropriated by the gleaners. 'They do not appear,' says Sir John Lubbock, 'to have considered the rights of the ants.' Indeed our duty towards insects is a question which seems hitherto to have escaped the notice of all moral philosophers. Even Mr. Herbert Spencer, the prophet of individualism, has never taken exception to our gross disregard of the proprietary rights of bees in their honey, or of silkworms in their cocoons. There are signs, however, that the obtuse human conscience is awakening in this respect; for when Dr. Loew suggested to bee-keepers the desirability of testing the commercial value of honey-ants, as rivals to the bee, Dr. McCook replied that 'the sentiment against the use of honey thus taken from living insects, which is worthy of all respect, would not be easily overcome.'

There are no harvesting ants in Northern Europe, though they extend as far as Syria, Italy, and the Riviera, in which latter station I have often observed them busily working. What most careless observers take for grain in the nests of English ants are

of course really the cocoons of the pupæ. For many years, therefore, entomologists were under the impression that Solomon had fallen into this popular error, and that when he described the ant as 'gathering her food in the harvest' and 'preparing her meat in the summer,' he was speaking rather as a poet than as a strict naturalist. Later observations, however, have vindicated the general accuracy of the much-married king by showing that true harvesting ants do actually occur in Syria, and that they lay by stores for the winter in the very way stated by that early entomologist, whose knowledge of 'creeping things' is specially enumerated in the long list of his universal accomplishments.

Dr. Lincecum of Texan fame has even improved upon Solomon by his discovery of those still more interesting and curious creatures, the agricultural ants of Texas. America is essentially a farming country, and the agricultural ants are born farmers. They make regular clearings around their nests, and on these clearings they allow nothing to grow except a particular kind of grain, known as ant-rice. Dr. Lincecum maintains that the tiny farmers actually sow and cultivate the ant-rice. Dr. McCook, on the other hand, is of opinion that the rice sows itself, and that the insects' part is limited to preventing any other plants or weeds from encroaching on the appropriated area. In any case, be they squatters or planters, it is certain that the rice, when ripe, is duly harvested, and that it is, to say the least, encouraged by the ants, to the exclusion of all other competitors. 'After the maturing and harvesting of the seed,' says Dr. Lincecum, 'the dry stubble is cut away and removed from the pavement, which is thus left fallow until the ensuing autumn, when the same species of grass, and in the same circle, appears again, and receives the same agricultural care as did the previous crop.' Sir John Lubbock, indeed, goes so far as to say that the three stages of human progress—the hunter, the herdsman, and the agriculturist—are all to be found among various species of existing ants.

The Saüba ants of tropical America carry their agricultural operations a step further. Dwelling in underground nests, they sally forth upon the trees, and cut out of the leaves large round pieces, about as big as a shilling. These pieces they drop upon the ground, where another detachment is in waiting to convey them to the galleries of the nest. There they store enormous quantities of these round pieces, which they allow to decay in the dark, so as to form a sort of miniature mushroom bed. On the

mouldering vegetable heap they have thus piled up, they induce a fungus to grow, and with this fungus they feed their young grubs during their helpless infancy. Mr. Belt, the 'Naturalist in Nicaragua,' found that native trees suffered far less from their depredations than imported ones. The ants hardly touched the local forests, but they stripped young plantations of orange, coffee, and mango trees stark naked. He ingeniously accounts for this curious fact by supposing that an internecine struggle has long been going on in the countries inhabited by the Saübas between the ants and the forest trees. Those trees that best resisted the ants, owing either to some unpleasant taste or to hardness of foliage, have in the long run survived destruction; but those which were suited for the purpose of the ants have been reduced to nonentity, while the ants in turn were getting slowly adapted to attack other trees. In this way almost all the native trees have at last acquired some special means of protection against the ravages of the leaf-cutters; so that they immediately fall upon all imported and unprotected kinds as their natural prey. This ingenious and wholly satisfactory explanation must of course go far to console the Brazilian planters for the frequent loss of their orange and coffee crops.

Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of the Darwinian theory (whose honours he waived with rare generosity in favour of the older and more distinguished naturalist), tells a curious story about the predatory habits of these same Saübas. On one occasion, when he was wandering about in search of specimens on the Rio Negro, he bought a peck of rice, which was tied up, Indian fashion, in the local bandanna of the happy plantation slave. At night he left his rice incautiously on the bench of the hut where he was sleeping; and next morning the Saübas had riddled the handkerchief like a sieve, and carried away a gallon of the grain for their own felonious purposes. The underground galleries which they dig can often be traced for hundreds of yards; and Mr. Hamlet Clark even asserts that in one case they have tunnelled under the bed of a river where it is a quarter of a mile wide. This beats Brunel on his own ground into the proverbial cocked hat, both for depth and distance.

Within doors, in the tropics, ants are apt to put themselves obtrusively forward in a manner little gratifying to any except the enthusiastically entomological mind. The winged females, after their marriage flight, have a disagreeable habit of flying in at the

open doors and windows at lunch time, settling upon the table like the Harpies in the Æneid, and then quietly shuffling off their wings one at a time, by holding them down against the table-cloth with one leg, and running away vigorously with the five others. As soon as they have thus disembarrassed themselves of their superfluous members, they proceed to run about over the lunch as if the house belonged to them, and to make a series of experiments upon the edible qualities of the different dishes. One doesn't so much mind their philosophical inquiries into the nature of the bread or even the meat; but when they come to drowning themselves by dozens, in the pursuit of knowledge, in the soup and the sherry, one feels bound to protest energetically against the spirit of martyrdom by which they are too profoundly animated. That is one of the slight drawbacks of the realms of perpetual summer: in the poets you see only one side of the picture—the palms, the orchids, the humming-birds, the great trailing lianas; in practical life you see the reverse side—the thermometer at 98°, the tepid drinking-water, the prickly heat, the perpetual languor, the endless shoals of aggressive insects. A lady of my acquaintance, indeed, made a valuable entomological collection in her own dining-room, by the simple process of consigning to pill-boxes all the moths and flies and beetles that settled upon the mangoes and star-apples in the course of dessert.

Another objectionable habit of the tropical ants, viewed practically, is their total disregard of vested interests in the case of house-property. Like Mr. George and his communistic friends, they disbelieve entirely in the principle of private rights in real estate. They will eat their way through the beams of your house till there is only a slender core of solid wood left to support the entire burden. I have taken down a rafter in my own house in Jamaica, originally 18 inches thick each way, with a sound circular centre of no more than 6 inches in diameter, upon which all the weight necessarily fell. With the material extracted from the wooden beams they proceed to add insult to injury by building long covered galleries right across the ceiling of your drawing-room. As may be easily imagined, these galleries do not tend to improve the appearance of the ceiling; and it becomes necessary to form a Liberty and Property Defence League for the protection of one's personal interests against the insect enemy. I have no objection to ants building galleries on their own freehold, or even to their nationalising the land in their native forests; but I do

object strongly to their unwarrantable intrusion upon the domain of private life. Expostulation and active warfare, however, are equally useless. The carpenter-ant has no moral sense, and is not amenable either to kindness or blows. On one occasion, when a body of these intrusive creatures had constructed an absurdly conspicuous brown gallery straight across the ceiling of my drawing-room, I determined to declare open war against them, and getting my black servant to bring in the steps and a mop, I proceeded to demolish the entire gallery just after breakfast. It was about 20 feet long, as well as I can remember, and perhaps an inch in diameter. At one o'clock I returned to lunch. My black servant pointed, with a broad grin on his intelligent features, to the wooden ceiling. I looked up: in those three hours the carpenter-ants had reconstructed the entire gallery, and were doubtless mocking me at their ease, with their uplifted antennæ, under that safe shelter. I retired at once from the unequal contest. It was clearly impossible to go on knocking down a fresh gallery every three hours of the day or night throughout a whole lifetime.

Ants, says Mr. Wallace, without one touch of satire, 'force themselves upon the attention of everyone who visits the tropics.' They do, indeed, and that most pungently; if by no other method, at least by the simple and effectual one of stinging. The majority of ants in every nest are of course neuters, or workers, that is to say, strictly speaking, undeveloped females, incapable of laying eggs. But they still retain the ovipositor, which is converted into a sting, and supplied with a poisonous liquid to eject afterwards into the wound. So admirably adapted to its purpose is this beautiful provision of nature, that some tropical ants can sting with such violence as to make your leg swell and confine you for some days to your room; while cases have even been known in which the person attacked has fainted with pain, or had a serious attack of fever in consequence. It is not every kind of ant, however, that can sting; a great many can only bite with their little hard horny jaws, and then eject a drop of formic poison afterwards into the hole caused by the bite. The distinction is a delicate physiological one, not much appreciated by the victims of either mode of attack. The perfect females can also sting, but not, of course, the males, who are poor, wretched, useless creatures, only good as husbands for the community, and dying off as soon as they have performed their part in the world—another beautiful provision, which saves

the workers the trouble of killing them off, as bees do with drones after the marriage flight of the queen bee.

The blind driver-ants of West Africa are among the very few species that render any service to man, and that, of course, only incidentally. Unlike most other members of their class, the driver-ants have no settled place of residence; they are vagabonds and wanderers upon the face of the earth, formican tramps, blind beggars, who lead a gipsy existence, and keep perpetually upon the move, smelling their way cautiously from one camping-place to another. They march by night, or on cloudy days, like wise tropical strategists, and never expose themselves to the heat of the day in broad sunshine, as though they were no better than the mere numbered British Tommy Atkins at Coomassie or in the Soudan. They move in vast armies across country, driving everything before them as they go; for they belong to the stinging division, and are very voracious in their personal habits. Not only do they eat up the insects in their line of march, but they fall even upon larger creatures and upon big snakes, which they attack first in the eyes, the most vulnerable portion. When they reach a negro village the inhabitants turn out *en masse*, and run away, exactly as if the visitors were English explorers or brave Marines, bent upon retaliating for the theft of a knife by nobly burning down King Tom's town or King Jumbo's capital. Then the negroes wait in the jungle till the little black army has passed on, after clearing out the huts by the way of everything eatable. When they return they find their calabashes and saucepans licked clean, but they also find every rat, mouse, lizard, cockroach, gecko, and beetle completely cleared out from the whole village. Most of them have cut and run at the first approach of the drivers; of the remainder, a few blanched and neatly-picked skeletons alone remain to tell the tale.

As I wish to be considered a veracious historian, I will not retail the further strange stories that still find their way into books of natural history about the manners and habits of these blind marauders. They cross rivers, the West African gossips declare, by a number of devoted individuals flinging themselves first into the water as a living bridge, like so many six-legged Marcus Curtiuses, while over their drowning bodies the heedless remainder march in safety to the other side. If the story is not true, it is at least well invented; for the ant-commonwealth everywhere carries to the extremest pitch the old Roman doctrine of

the absolute subjection of the individual to the State. So exactly is this the case that in some species there are a few large, overgrown, lazy ants in each nest, which do no work themselves, but accompany the workers on their expeditions; and the sole use of these idle mouths seems to be to attract the attention of birds and other enemies, and so distract it from the useful workers, the mainstay of the entire community. It is almost as though an army, marching against a tribe of cannibals, were to place itself in the centre of a hollow square formed of all the fattest people in the country, whose fine condition and fitness for killing might immediately engross the attention of the hungry enemy. Ants, in fact, have, for the most part, already reached the goal set before us as a delightful one by most current schools of socialist philosophers, in which the individual is absolutely sacrificed in every way to the needs of the community.

The most absurdly human, however, among all the tricks and habits of ants are their well-known cattle-farming and slave-holding instincts. Everybody has heard, of course, how they keep the common rose-blight as milch cows, and suck from them the sweet honey-dew. But everybody, probably, does not yet know the large number of insects which they herd in one form or another as domesticated animals. Man has, at most, some twenty or thirty such, including cows, sheep, horses, donkeys, camels, llamas, alpacas, reindeer, dogs, cats, canaries, pigs, fowl, ducks, geese, turkeys, and silkworms. But ants have hundreds and hundreds, some of them kept obviously for purposes of food; others apparently as pets; and yet others again, as has been plausibly suggested, by reason of superstition or as objects of worship. There is a curious blind beetle which inhabits ants' nests, and is so absolutely dependent upon its hosts for support that it has even lost the power of feeding itself. It never quits the nest, but the ants bring it in food and supply it by putting the nourishment actually into its mouth. But the beetle, in return, seems to secrete a sweet liquid (or it may even be a stimulant like beer, or a narcotic like tobacco) in a tuft of hairs near the bottom of the hard wing-cases, and the ants often lick this tuft with every appearance of satisfaction and enjoyment. In this case, and in many others, there can be no doubt that the insects are kept for the sake of food or some other advantage yielded by them.

But there are other instances of insects which haunt ants' nests, which it is far harder to account for on any hypothesis save

that of superstitious veneration. There is a little weevil that runs about by hundreds in the galleries of English ants, in and out among the free citizens, making itself quite at home in their streets and public places, but as little noticed by the ants themselves as dogs are in our own cities. Then, again, there is a white woodlouse, something like the common little armadillo, but blind from having lived so long underground, which walks up and down the lanes and alleys of antdom, without ever holding any communication of any sort with its hosts and neighbours. In neither case has Sir John Lubbock ever seen an ant take the slightest notice of the presence of these strange fellow-lodgers. 'One might almost imagine,' he says, 'that they had the cap of invisibility.' Yet it is quite clear that the ants deliberately sanction the residence of the weevils and woodlice in their nests, for any unauthorised intruder would immediately be set upon and massacred outright. Sir John Lubbock suggests that they may perhaps be tolerated as scavengers; or, again, it is possible that they may prey upon the eggs or larvæ of some of the parasites to whose attacks the ants are subject. In the first case, their use would be similar to that of the wild dogs in Constantinople or the common black John-crow vultures in tropical America: in the second case, they would be about equivalent to our own cats or to the hedgehog often put in farmhouse kitchens to keep down cockroaches.

The crowning glory of owning slaves, which many philosophic Americans (before the war) showed to be the highest and noblest function of the most advanced humanity, has been attained by more than one variety of anthood. Our great English horse-ant is a moderate slaveholder; but the big red ant of Southern Europe carries the domestic institution many steps further. It makes regular slave-raids upon the nests of the small brown ants, and carries off the young in their pupa condition. By-and-by the brown ants hatch out in the strange nest, and, never having known any other life except that of slavery, accommodate themselves to it readily enough. The red ant, however, is still only an occasional slaveowner; if necessary, he can get along by himself, without the aid of his little brown servants. Indeed, there are free states and slave states of red ants side by side with one another, as of old in Maryland and Pennsylvania: in the first, the red ants do their work themselves, like mere vulgar Ohio farmers; in the second, they get their work done for them by

their industrious little brown servants, like the aristocratic first families of Virginia before the earthquake of emancipation.

But there are other degraded ants, whose life-history may be humbly presented to the consideration of the Anti-Slavery Society, as speaking more eloquently than any other known fact for the demoralising effect of slaveowning upon the slaveholders themselves. The Swiss rufescent ant is a species so long habituated to rely entirely upon the services of slaves that it is no longer able to manage its own affairs when deprived by man of its hereditary bondsmen. It has lost entirely the art of constructing a nest; it can no longer tend its own young, whom it leaves entirely to the care of negro nurses; and its bodily structure even has changed, for the jaws have lost their teeth, and have been converted into mere nippers, useful only as weapons of war. The rufescent ant, in fact, is a purely military caste, which has devoted itself entirely to the pursuit of arms, leaving every other form of activity to its slaves and dependents. Officers of the old school will be glad to learn that this military insect is dressed, if not in scarlet, at any rate in very decent red, and that it refuses to be bothered in any way with questions of transport or commissariat. If the community changes its nest, the masters are carried on the backs of their slaves to the new position, and the black ants have to undertake the entire duty of foraging and bringing in stores of supply for their gentlemanly proprietors. Only when war is to be made upon neighbouring nests does the thin red line form itself into long file for active service. Nothing could be more perfectly aristocratic than the views of life entertained and acted upon by these distinguished slaveholders.

On the other hand, the picture has its reverse side, exhibiting clearly the weak points of the slaveholding system. The rufescent ant has lost even the very power of feeding itself. So completely dependent is each upon his little black valet for daily bread, that he cannot so much as help himself to the food that is set before him. Hüber put a few slaveholders into a box with some of their own larvæ and pupæ, and a supply of honey, in order to see what they would do with them. Appalled at the novelty of the situation, the slaveholders seemed to come to the conclusion that something must be done; so they began carrying the larvæ about aimlessly in their mouths, and rushing up and down in search of the servants. After a while, however, they gave it up and came to the conclusion that life under such circumstances was clearly

intolerable. They never touched the honey, but resigned themselves to their fate like officers and gentlemen. In less than two days, half of them had died of hunger, rather than taste a dinner which was not supplied to them by a properly constituted footman. Admiring their heroism or pitying their incapacity, Hüber, at last, gave them just one slave between them all. The plucky little negro, nothing daunted by the gravity of the situation, set to work at once, dug a small nest, gathered together the larvæ, helped several pupæ out of the cocoon, and saved the lives of the surviving slaveowners. Other naturalists have tried similar experiments, and always with the same result. The slaveowners will starve in the midst of plenty rather than feed themselves without attendance. Either they cannot or will not put the food into their own mouths with their own mandibles.

There are yet other ants, such as the workerless *Anergates*, in which the degradation of slaveholding has gone yet further. These wretched creatures are the formican representatives of those Oriental despots who are no longer even warlike, but are sunk in sloth and luxury, and pass their lives in eating bang or smoking opium. Once upon a time, Sir John Lubbock thinks, the ancestors of *Anergates* were marauding slaveowners, who attacked and made serfs of other ants. But gradually they lost not only their arts but even their military prowess, and were reduced to making war by stealth instead of openly carrying off their slaves in fair battle. It seems probable that they now creep into a nest of the far more powerful slave ants, poison or assassinate the queen, and establish themselves by sheer usurpation in the queenless nest. 'Gradually,' says Sir John Lubbock, 'even their bodily force dwindled away under the enervating influence to which they had subjected themselves, until they sank to their present degraded condition—weak in body and mind, few in numbers, and apparently nearly extinct, the miserable representatives of far superior ancestors, maintaining a precarious existence as contemptible parasites of their former slaves.' One may observe in passing, that these wretched donothings cannot have been the ants which Solomon commended to the favourable consideration of the sluggard; though it is curious that the text was never pressed into the service of defence for the peculiar institution by the advocates of slavery in the South, who were always most anxious to prove the righteousness of their cause by most sure and certain warranty of Holy Scripture.

THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY' ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A ROYAL PATRON.

WILLIAM HENRY performed his promise punctually, and presented himself next morning at Drury Lane. He had never been inside a theatre by daylight before, and the contrast of the scene to that to which he had been accustomed struck him very forcibly. If any young gentleman belonging to me were stage-struck, I should ask the permission of the lessee of one of our National Theatres to allow me to introduce him into its auditorium some dullish morning. If his enthusiasm survived, I will believe that the passion for the sea will still remain in a boy's breast after a visit to a ship's cockpit. The spectacle of those draped galleries, those empty seats and ill-lit space, where all was wont to be light and laughter, is little short of ghastly. William Henry indeed only caught glimpses of it here and there, through the eye-holes over the doors, as he was led through the echoing passages to the back of the stage; but they were sufficient. He in vain attempted to picture to himself the very different appearance the place would bear when probably he should see it next, at the representation of 'Vortigern and Rowena.'

His imagination was chilled. The object of his visit, even though it might well have done so, since it was to be interviewed by two of the most charming women on the English stage, did not fill him with the pleasurable anticipation which he had experienced when he had received their invitation. There was no harm in it, of course, but he had come without Margaret's knowledge, and his conscience reproached him for so doing. It was no doubt her own fault; she had shown such unmistakable feelings of jealousy on the previous day, and had expressed such uncharitable views on the character of actresses in general, that he had shrunk from telling her of the appointment he had made for to-morrow. It was a pity that the dear girl was so unreasonable; for though she had entirely agreed with him that Mrs. Powell's conduct, of which he had given her an amusing version, had been pert, she had failed to understand what a contrast that of Mrs. Jordan afforded, or how distinctly it bespoke a simple and ingenuous nature. He had never dreamt, of course, of repeating Mrs. Powell's parting remark about 'poor Margaret;' but if such a notion had entered his mind, the manner in which the dear girl had received other details of the little interview would have forbidden it. He felt quite certain that she was capable of believing that Mrs. Jordan was ready to fall in love with him, or even had already done it. The very idea of such a thing, when she knew he was engaged to somebody else, was of course ridiculous. He thought that it would have set Margaret's mind at ease to tell her that he had given that piece of information to the ladies, whereas it had aroused her indignation, not indeed against him but against them. 'What right had they to ask such questions? It was impertinent, forward, and indelicate; and she did hope that those young women would never commit the impropriety of calling in Norfolk Street and asking to see a young gentleman, with whom they could have no earthly business, again.'

And now, unknown to Margaret, he was going to see *them*. The conscience at seventeen is tender, and it was no wonder William Henry's smote him. At that age, however, the memory (for some things) is unfortunately short, and when a door suddenly opened from a labyrinthine passage, into a prettily furnished room, where Mrs. Jordan, reclining in an arm-chair, was reading with rapt attention a certain manuscript he recognised, he thought he had never seen anyone so beautiful before.

She rose with a pleasant smile, and a natural coquettish air which became her charmingly, and bade him welcome.

'Pray come in,' said she, for he stood at the door entranced; 'it is not everyone that is admitted into my dressing-room, but I shan't bite you.'

It was not the least like a dressing-room except that it had a multiplicity of mirrors, but her calling it so discomposed him (he could not help thinking to himself how very much more, if she had but known it, it would have discomposed Margaret); his knees had a tendency to knock together, and he felt that he looked like a fool.

'You need not be afraid,' continued the lady smiling, not displeased perhaps to see the effect she had produced in him, the symptoms of which were not unfamiliar to her; 'Mrs. Powell will be here directly—she is not so punctual as you are.'

'She has not so much reason to be, madam,' said William Henry. The words had occurred to him as if by inspiration, but directly they were uttered he repented of them. He had intended them to be very gallant, but they now struck him as exceedingly foolish.

'He is certainly a very amusing young man,' said the lady, as if addressing a third person. 'Pray sit down, sir. I saw your father after I had the pleasure of seeing you yesterday. You are not in the least alike. You should have seen Kemble and him together; it was as good as any play. They don't hit it off together so well as you and I do. Perhaps you will say again they have not so much reason.'

'It was a very unfortunate remark of mine,' said William Henry penitently.

'I don't know that; you needn't be so hard upon yourself. I think you had an idea that you were somehow paying me a compliment. For my part, however, I have enough of compliments, and prefer a little honesty for a change.'

William Henry bethought him of saying something about the genuineness of some compliments, but by the expression of her face, which had suddenly become grave, he judged that she had had enough of the subject, and remained silent.

'And how is Margaret?'

The young man blushed to the roots of his hair, and blushed the more because he felt himself blushing.

'I have heard of the young lady from your father, and nothing but good of her. I hope'—this with great severity—'that you are not ashamed of her, sir.'

'No, madam.'

'And I hope, sir'—this with an angry flash of her bright eyes—'that you are not ashamed of me.'

'Madam!'

'Then why did you not tell her that you were coming here?'

William Henry bit his lip, and was about to stammer something he knew not what, when fortunately there was a knock at the door.

'Come in,' said Mrs. Jordan.

The knocking was continued very loudly, but the permission was not repeated. Mrs. Jordan began to laugh, and at every recurrence of the summons laughed more and more. Then the door was opened a very little way. 'Are you sure that I may come in, Dorothy? Are you sure I don't intrude?' inquired a musical voice in accents of pretended anxiety.

And then Mrs. Powell entered.

'You are late,' observed Mrs. Jordan reprovingly; 'that is not like your usual habits.'

'I thought you might like to have a little time to yourselves, my dear,' replied the other with great simplicity. 'I am quite sorry to trouble you with business matters, Mr. Erin, but the fact is it's pressing. I must have Edmunda altered; she is heavy in hand.'

'But, my dear madam, what has that to do with *me*?'

'With you? Why, everything; to whom else can I come? Kemble won't listen to me; your father, a most respectable man no doubt, is quite impracticable, and only raves about the Immortal Bard.'

'But I cannot alter Shakespeare's play, madam.'

'Why not? He's dead, isn't he? Besides, his plays have been often enough altered before. Garrick did it for one.'

'Perhaps, madam; but then I am not Garrick. I can no more alter a play than write one.'

'Upon my word, my dear,' interposed Mrs. Jordan, 'there is a good deal in what Mr. Erin says. I want to have things altered in my own part, but if, as he tells us——'

'Pooh! nonsense,' broke in the other; 'you have nothing to complain of in Flavia. She is in man's clothes, which fit you to a nicety, and that is all you need care about.'

'If he takes my advice he won't touch the play,' said Mrs. Jordan, fairly trembling with rage.

'There you see the Country Girl,' said Mrs. Powell, pointing to her friend with a little hand that trembled too. 'Her temper is only so long' (she indicated the twentieth part of an inch). 'Nobody

can say that she has not a natural manner, or does not know how to blush.'

'Nobody can say of Mrs. Powell,' retorted the other, 'when she tries to blush, that her beauty is only skin deep.'

It was certainly a most terrible scene, and most heartily did William Henry wish himself back in Norfolk Street. At the very moment, however, when he expected to see them dig their nails into one another, both ladies burst out laughing. He began to think that either their rage or their laughter must needs be artificial, whereas, in fact, while they lasted they were both real enough. Mirth with them was the natural safety-valve of all their passions, and a very excellent mechanical contrivance too.

'But won't you just lighten my Edmunda a little, Mr. Erin,' persisted Mrs. Powell; 'a touch here and a touch there?'

'My dear madam, supposing even I were capable of doing such a thing (which I am not), just consider what people would say if I touched the play. Even now our enemies attack its authenticity, and what a handle must such a proceeding needs afford them.'

'That is surely reasonable,' observed Mrs. Jordan for the second time.

'I don't know about reasonable,' returned Mrs. Powell with a most bewitching pout; 'but I know if you were not here I could persuade him.'

'Shall I leave you?' said Mrs. Jordan, making a feint of retiring from the room.

'Oh no,' pleaded William Henry involuntarily.

'Well, upon my life,' cried Mrs. Powell, 'you are a most complimentary young man! However, I'll leave *you*, which, considering the company you are in, will be quite revenge enough.' She stood at the door, drawn up to her full height like a tragedy queen; then suddenly altering her tone, her air, her voice, and becoming as if by magic the very picture of pity, she added 'Poor Margaret!' and was gone.

'She is a queer mad creature, but means no harm,' said Mrs. Jordan consolingly. 'She was angry at your refusal to alter her part for her, and when she is angry she will say anything. You must not mind her. Now, I've taken a fancy to you, Master—— By the bye, what is your name?'

'Erin.'

'Chut! I mean your Christian name?'

'William Henry.'

'And what does Margaret call you?'

'Willie.'

'Very good; then since I have no wish to poach on Margaret's preserves, I shall call you "Henry." I've taken a fancy to you, Master Henry, and mean to do you a service; a gentleman of influence, with whom I have some interest, wants to look at these Shakespeare manuscripts, and has directed them to be at his house this morning.'

'I am afraid they will not be there,' said William Henry. 'My father has never permitted them to leave Norfolk Street except once, at the personal request of the Prince Regent.'

'Nevertheless, I think the gentleman I speak of will have his way,' said the actress, smiling. 'Now I wish him, in case he sees the manuscripts, to see their discoverer also. Perhaps he may give him a helping hand.'

'You are very kind,' said William Henry gently; it was not gratitude for the favour to come that moved him, for he never expected it to be realised, but her evident warmth of feeling towards him. Her manner had not only an exquisite grace, but an unmistakable tenderness; and then she was so exceedingly handsome. A young man's heart is like the tinder, which in those days, with flint and steel, was the substitute for our lucifer matches; away from its box it is liable to danger from every spark. 'You are very good and kind,' repeated William Henry, mechanically; he felt an impulse hard to be withstood, to add 'and very beautiful.'

'I am not good,' said his companion, gravely, 'but I suppose I am kind enough. It is much easier, my young friend, to be kind than good. Well, now I am going to take you to this gentleman.'

She put on her cloak and bonnet, and led the way to the stage door of the theatre. A closed carriage, well appointed, was at the door, in waiting for her, and they took their seats. In a few minutes they were whirled to their destination—a huge red house set in a courtyard, with which William Henry was unacquainted, or which in the perturbation of his mind he failed to recognise. They passed through certain corridors into a large room looking on a garden. It was handsomely furnished; a harp stood in one corner, a piano in the other; the walls were hung with beautiful pictures. But what aroused William Henry's amazement, and prevented him from giving his attention else-

where, was the circumstance that on a table by the window were arranged the whole collection of the Shakespeare papers.

'You are looking for your father's blood upon them,' said Mrs. Jordan, smiling; 'you are thinking to yourself that he must surely have been cut to pieces ere he would have permitted them to leave his hands. But the fact is—— Hush, here comes your future patron.'

William Henry was used to a patron, and for that matter to a sufficiently mysterious one; but for the moment he was devoured by curiosity, mingled with a certain awe. The appearance of the new comer, if he had expected to see anyone very magnificent, must have been a disappointment to him, for it certainly was not of an imposing kind. There entered the room, so rapidly that he almost seemed to run, a young man of thirty, somewhat inclined to corpulence, with a cheery good-natured face, but decidedly commonplace in its expression.

'Well, well, Dorothy, you see I'm here,' he said, without taking the least notice of the stranger's presence. 'Now let us see these manuscripts—wonderful manuscripts—and get it over.' He spoke with great volubility, and plumped down on a chair by the table as if in a great hurry. 'What funny writing, and what queer ink and paper! and what great seals! Shakespeare was never Lord Chancellor, was he?'

'I don't think he was, sir,' said Mrs. Jordan, laughing. 'It was the fashion in those days for deeds to wear fob and watch and chain.'

'Fobs, fobs? I see no fobs. So this is "Lear;" I've seen "Lear." The play where everybody has their eyes put out. So he wrote it like this, did he? I wonder how anybody could read it. Hambllett, Hambllett; I never heard of him. Notes of hand. Gad! I know them pretty well.'

'This is the young gentleman, sir, to whom we owe the discovery of all these manuscripts,' said Mrs. Jordan, drawing his attention to William Henry.

'Ay, ay,' said the new-comer, wheeling his chair round to get a good view of William Henry's face. 'You found them, did you? them that hide can find; that's what people tell me, you know.'

The speech was such a rude one, that it might have been uttered by the First Gentleman in Europe, nor indeed was William Henry by any means certain that he was not standing

in his august presence; but there was a good-natured twinkle in the stranger's eye which mitigated the harshness of his words. Never, indeed, before had the doubts concerning the genuineness of the manuscripts been expressed in a manner so personally offensive to the young fellow, and notwithstanding his conviction that the speaker was a man of very high rank, he might not have hesitated to resent it, but for a certain appealing look which Mrs. Jordan cast at him. He remembered that it was for his own sake that she had asked him to meet this man, and that if he offended him, she herself might be the sufferer. He therefore only answered with a forced smile, 'I should think no one but Mr. Malone could have told you that.'

'And who the deuce is Mr. Malone?' was the contemptuous rejoinder; a question that put the coping-stone on the young fellow's embarrassment and, indeed, utterly discomfited him. He felt transported into strange regions, with a new atmosphere; a world that had never heard of Mr. Malone the commentator was unintelligible to him. It is one of the lessons that can only be taught by years, and of which the 'Montys' and 'Algys' of high life are as ignorant as the 'Jacks' and 'Harrys' of low, that our respective horizons are limited.

As William Henry stood tongue-tied, a sudden burst of melody filled the room. Mrs. Jordan had sat down to the piano, and was singing with exquisite pathos a song that was very familiar to him.

> Detraction strove to turn her heart
>   And sour her gentle mind;
> But Charity still kept her part,
>   And meekness to her soul did bind.

'Very nice, and very true,' murmured the strange gentleman approvingly, keeping time with head and hand to the tune. His irritation had departed like an evil spirit exorcised; into his coarse countenance had stolen an expression of pure enjoyment; his eyes were full of gentleness and even affection. Such power has the voice and the instrument (when accompanied by a pretty face) even on the most commonplace natures.

'Now what is that, what is that?' he exclaimed excitedly, when the song was done. 'And why have I never heard it before, my dear?'

'Because it is brand-new, sir,' said Mrs. Jordan, with a bewitching curtsey. 'I sing it as Flavia in this new play of

"Vortigern and Rowena," which is to be performed next month at Drury Lane, and which I hope you will come to see.'

'Certainly, certainly. Why shouldn't I?

> Detraction strove to turn her heart
> And sour her gentle mind.

But it didn't succeed, did it, Dorothy?'

'I hope not, sir,' returned the lady modestly. 'Then I may take it as a promise, sir, that you will honour this performance with your presence; it will be on the second of April.'

'Yes, yes; tell Sherry to keep a box—a box. And now I'm off to the Privy Council. Sorry I can't take you with me, Dorothy, but you're not sworn in yet—not sworn in.'

And off he shambled; his walk and talk were very like one another—rapid, irregular, and fitful.

'There,' cried Mrs. Jordan triumphantly, 'I have got what I wanted for you, Master Harry; the play will now have the Royal patronage.'

'Then that gentleman is——'

'His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, *my husband*.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

A DROLL rogue of my acquaintance, whom (one tried to think) the force of circumstance, rather than any natural disposition, had driven from the pavement of integrity into the gutter, used to maintain that it was better to confess one's peccadilloes, with such colourable excuses as might suggest themselves, than to conceal them. In the former case you might, with a struggle, get out of the scrape and have done with it; in the latter case you were never safe from discovery, and when it came there was sure to be a catastrophe.

There was, it is true, no peccadillo in William Henry's keeping that appointment we wot of with those two charming ornaments of Drury Lane Theatre, but since he had an impression that Margaret might not like it, he ought, according to my friend's philosophy, to have told her all about it. After his interview with his Royal Highness (which could not be concealed) he felt that this straightforward course was the right one,

and as he returned home in the hackney carriage with the precious manuscripts, amused himself with the thoughts of the pleasure Margaret would exhibit on hearing of the greatness that had been thrust upon him. When her mind had been dazzled by visions of Royalty, he had intended to slip out in a casual way that he had been indebted for his introduction to his Royal Highness to one of those professional persons who had called in Norfolk Street the previous day on business, and whom he had been compelled to receive in place of his father—a Mrs. Jordan. The whole thing ran as smoothly and naturally in his own mind as could be. It was like some well-oiled mechanical machine, which the inventor (though of course it was no invention, only an adaptation) feels confident will do all he expects of it, only somehow in practice it doesn't act. He found Margaret not in the least interested about his Royal Highness, and very much excited about the lady who had been the mere medium of his introduction, and whose part in the matter he had taken, it must be confessed, some pains to minimise.

'You have not been frank with me, William Henry,' she said with some severity.

He had it upon his lips to say that since he was William Henry he could hardly be Frank, but he felt she was in no mood for banter; and moreover, with that name there naturally occurred to him the thought of Frank Dennis, which made his heart stand still. It was not her anger that he feared, nor even the diminution of her love, though that had been indicated very significantly by the mention of his double name (which she had not used for months) instead of 'Willie,' but the possible diversion of her love to another object. Perhaps she was already making a comparison in her mind between himself and a certain other person who, whatever his faults, would, she knew, never have deceived her.

It was not impossible that love could stray, for had it not done so but a few hours ago, within his own experience, and with no such provocation. It was very different, of course, in his case; there is a certain latitude given to men, and the handsomest man on the stage, or off it, would, he was well aware, not have caused Margaret to forget her Willie even for an instant. But then women, he knew, when they are jealous, are capable of anything, and from pique will not only 'be off' with those they love, but sometimes 'be on' with another.

'I am very sorry, Margaret,' he stammered, 'but I really don't know what you mean.'

'Then your face belies your words,' was the cold reply. 'Why did you not tell me yesterday that you were going to meet that woman at Drury Lane this morning?'

'There were two of them,' said William Henry eagerly, urged, as he felt, by some fortunate inspiration to tell the whole truth.

'Oh, there were two, were there?' Though she strove to keep her tone the same, there was a relaxation in her severity that did not escape him; the reflection that there was safety in numbers had no doubt occurred to her. 'You omitted that circumstance, sir, in your previous narrative, with, no doubt, many others.'

'Indeed, Margaret, I have told you all; that is, all that I thought could have any interest for you. I ought to have said, of course, that the invitation to the theatre came from both the ladies; they wanted to have some alteration made in the play for them (which of course was out of the question). Mrs. Powell was very angry about it; I should think she had a temper of her own.'

'I don't want to hear about Mrs. Powell.'

There was once a young gentleman who was endeavouring to make himself agreeable as a *raconteur* in the presence of Royalty. When he had done his story, the Royal lips let fall these terrible words: 'We are not amused.' Poor William Henry found himself in much the same position. His reminiscences of Mrs. Powell were, as it were, cut off at the main. Margaret's instinct had eliminated that factor from the sum of the matter as insignificant; there was another person to talk about, it was true, but he was averse to enter upon that subject. Unhappily it was suggested to him as a topic.

'Who, may I ask, is this Mrs. Jordan?'

'Well, she was the other lady, of course, who called here,' said William Henry (he felt that he was turning a lively red, and it was so important to him that he should keep his colour). 'She is to perform Flavia in the play.'

'The person in man's clothes?' observed Margaret icily.

'Well, she plays the Page; you can hardly expect her to play him in petticoats. It was not a dress rehearsal,' stammered the young man, 'if you mean that. They simply asked me, both of them, to step round to the theatre this morning and render them some professional assistance, which, as it happened, I am unable

to do. I cannot for the life of me see what harm there was in that.'

'Then why did you not tell me you were going?'

It was the same dreadful question over again. Of course he ought to have told her, and if he had had any idea that she would have come to know of it he certainly would have done so. He looked so sorry (not to say silly) that Margaret's heart melted a little.

'You know how I hate anything clandestine and underhand, William Henry.'

'I know it,' he answered, with a deep sigh. His face was one of such abject misery, that one would have said, whatever he had done, he was sufficiently punished for it. Her heart melted more and more; he went on penitently:

'Of course I ought to have told you, Margaret, but I did not conceal it because there was anything to be ashamed of. Only I knew you would not like it, that you would think there was harm in it—as you do, it seems, where there is no harm. It was surely a great piece of goodnature on their part, after I had disappointed them about the play, to offer to do their best for it, and to get the Duke——'

'Did they both go with you to St. James's Palace?' she put in dryly.

He was on the point of saying that there had been only room for two in the coach, but fortunately he was a young gentleman who thought before he spoke. It would certainly not have been a satisfactory explanation, and the very idea that he had been about to make it turned him scarlet.

'No wonder you are ashamed of yourself, sir,' said she, perceiving his confusion. 'Why do you talk to me about "they" and "them," when you know that only one of these women had anything to do with the matter?'

'Well, naturally, my dear, Mrs. Jordan was the person to introduce me to his Royal Highness, since she has been privately married to him.'

'I don't believe one word of it.'

'I can only say she told me so,' said William Henry simply.

Margaret did not give much credit to the assertion of this lady, but she believed what William Henry said. After all, the poor young fellow had probably meant no harm, nor even dreamt of the meshes into which this designing female would

have drawn him. He had only been indiscreet and a little surreptitious, and had been rated enough.

'You don't know what these actresses are, Willie,' she said gravely, 'nor what pleasure they take in making misery and estrangements between honest people. Nothing this woman would like better, I'm sure of it, than to come between you and me.'

'My dear Margaret, how can you say such things? If you had only seen her!'

'I don't want to see her,' interpolated Margaret quickly.

'A person entirely devoted to her profession, in which she is justly held in the highest esteem.'

'I don't deny that she is a good actress,' returned Margaret significantly; 'indeed I have no doubt of it.'

'And she spoke of you so kindly.'

'Of me? How dared she speak of me?' cried Margaret with flashing eye. 'What does she know of me?'

'Well, she saw you just for a moment when you looked in by accident yesterday, and she said how beautiful and kind you looked, and congratulated me——'

'You should never have told those women of our engagement sir?' she put in.

'Why not? What is there to be ashamed of? Am I not proud of it? Why should I not tell them?'

His simplicity was very touching. If there had been such a thing as a male *ingénue* upon the stage, the speaker would have been the very man to play it.

'How they must have laughed at you in their sleeves, my poor Willie!' she answered pityingly.

He did not think it necessary to state that they had laughed at him, and by no means in their sleeves.

'I will never see them again if you don't wish it,' said William Henry, still sticking to the plural number. 'Only I suppose when the "Vortigern" comes to be acted, it will be necessary to do so just for a night or two.'

'Oh, I don't mind your seeing them at the play, Willie. We shall, of course, be there together.'

He had meant that his assistance would probably be required behind the scenes. Indeed Mrs. Jordan had taken it for granted that he would be a constant visitor at the theatre while the play was in preparation, and he had very willingly acquiesced in that

arrangement, but he had not the courage to say so. He was only too thankful that Margaret's suspicions were for the moment set at rest. He knew that she was of a jealous disposition, and also that she abhorred deceit, and he loved her none the less on either account, but there were reasons why her manifestation of such excessive displeasure on so small a matter alarmed him, and made his heart heavy within him. However, in a month or two they would be married. He would then be her very own, and she would have no misgivings about him; and as to deceit, there would be no further cause for it, and what was past and gone would surely be forgiven. But still his heart was heavy.

Considering Margaret's youth and her middle-class position in life, the irritation and annoyance she had exhibited may seem unnatural as well as uncalled for. Young women of her age and rank are not nowadays supposed to know so much about the temptations of the stage, but in her time matters were different. The charms of this and that popular actress, and even their mode of life, were topics of common talk, and there was none of them more talked about than Mrs. Jordan. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that Margaret regarded her as a siren attracted by the notoriety (not to mention the innocence and beauty) of her Willie, who designed to wile him from the quiet harbour of domestic love into the stormy seas of passion. Moreover, it must be said for Margaret that her jealousy was not like that of some people who, while resenting the interference of others with their private property, do not lavish on it any especial kindness of their own. She had always been the friend and defender of William Henry, even before he became her lover, and had long-established claims on his fidelity, and it galled her that one glimpse of a pretty face should have so worked with him as to induce him to renew acquaintance with it, under what seemed to her such suspicious circumstances, and especially in so secret and clandestine a fashion. It had always been a complaint of hers in the old days that William Henry was inclined to deception. It was in relation, however, to Mr. Erin only that she had observed it, and in that case there had been, certainly, excuses for the young man; but that he should have deceived *her*—if, at least, concealment could be called deception—she justly considered to be less pardonable. However, she had now said her say, and with a vigour that the circumstances scarcely called for; indeed she felt that she had been somewhat hard upon him. However wrong he had been

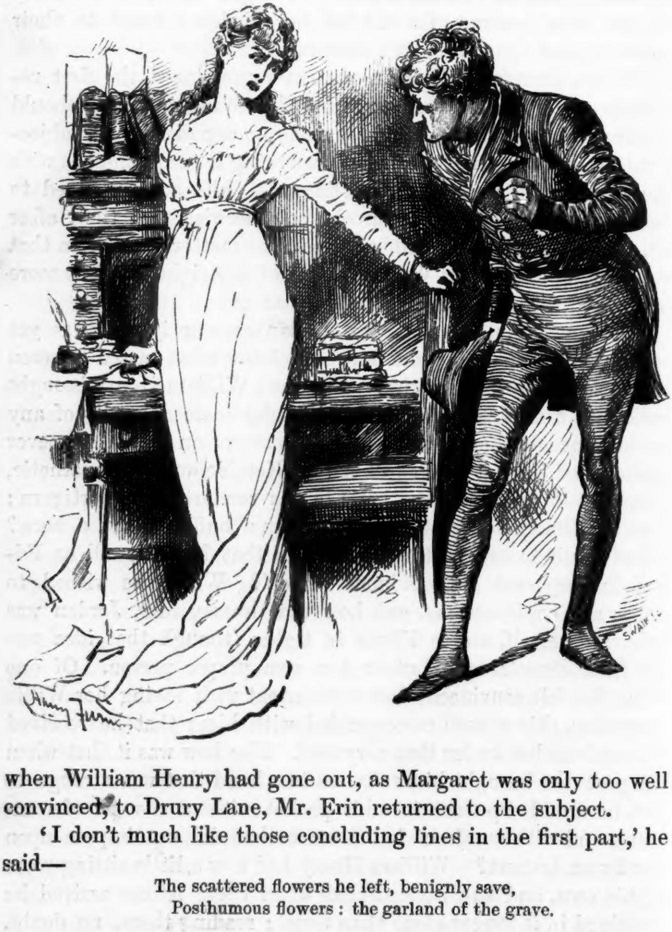
to try to hoodwink her, that had been the extent of his offending. He could hardly have declined to go to the theatre; and, indeed, she confessed to herself that while the play was in progress it was not reasonable to expect him to hold no communication with those who were to perform in it. The matter interested him very much, nor did she forget that it was mainly on her own account, for did not her uncle's consent to their union depend upon the play's success?

When, therefore, Mr. Erin presently announced the first rehearsal at the theatre, and suggested that William Henry should be present to witness it, Margaret made no opposition; her objections, in short, to the young man's renewing his acquaintance with the fair Flavia were tacitly withdrawn. She acknowledged to herself that things could scarcely be otherwise, and that, after all, there could be no possible harm in the matter; and from that moment, whenever her Willie was out of her sight, she was more tormented with the fires of jealousy than ever.

She knew that he saw Mrs. Jordan constantly, and was yet compelled to ignore it; she burned to know what passed between them, yet scorned to inquire. The news William Henry brought back with him of the prospects of the play seemed hardly of any consequence to her compared with matters on which he never spoke at all. What was it to her that Kemble was unsympathetic, dogged, and studiously apathetic in his rendering of Vortigern; that Phillimore as Horsus was more like a buffoon than a hero? What was it to her, on the other hand, that Mrs. Powell as Edmunda surpassed Mrs. Siddons herself? What she wished to know, and could not ask, was how that hussey Mrs. Jordan was behaving herself, not as Flavia in tights (though that idea was far from consolatory), but in her own proper person. Of one thing she felt convinced, that not content with seeing her Willie every day, this woman corresponded with him; that he received letters from her under that very roof. Else how was it that when the post now brought him missives in a hand that was strange to her, he would slip them into his pocket without a word of comment, and with an air of indifference that did not impose upon her for an instant? William Henry had now a little sitting-room of his own, and she noticed that when these letters arrived he remained in it longer alone than usual; reading them, no doubt, over and over, perhaps replying to them in the same fervid style in which (she felt sure) they were written, and possibly (for

Margaret, though no poet like her Willie, had a lively imagination of her own) even kissing them.

One morning the Epilogue to 'Vortigern and Rowena' arrived from Mr. Merry, and was discussed at breakfast-time word by word, as befitted so important a document. An hour afterwards,



when William Henry had gone out, as Margaret was only too well convinced, to Drury Lane, Mr. Erin returned to the subject.

'I don't much like those concluding lines in the first part,' he said—

> The scattered flowers he left, benignly save,
> Posthumous flowers: the garland of the grave.

'It ran "benignly save," did it not, Madge?'

'I am not sure, uncle.'

'Then just go and get the thing out of Samuel's room.'

Margaret went and looked about her for the manuscript in question. It was nowhere to be found. But in her researches she came upon another document spread out in the half-opened drawer of the writing-table; it was written in a delicate hand on large letter-paper, and it was almost impossible that she could avoid reading the commencement of it.

'My dear W. H.,' it began, and then followed a mass of heterogeneous words without sense or meaning, as if they had been taken at random out of some dictionary. It is probable that Margaret had never heard of a cryptogram, but she had heard of communications written in cypher, and it flashed upon her mind at once that she was looking at some letter of that nature. It was bad enough that this abandoned hussey of Drury Lane, who dwelt but a mile away from them, and saw her Willie five days out of six, should nevertheless have the audacity to correspond with him; but that she should write such things as could not bear the light and had to be concealed in cypher was indeed intolerable. Granting her premisses, there was certainly ample cause for the indignation that mantled to her very forehead, and the bitterness that took possession of her very soul.

As she stood with one hand on the table, for her limbs trembled with the agitation that shook her mind, she heard the front door softly closed, and a hurried footstep in the passage. It was William Henry, who had remembered no doubt—too late—that he had left the letter exposed to view, and had returned to place it in some safer receptacle. The next moment he was face to face with her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CYPHER.

'I KNOW what you are come for,' said Margaret in a broken voice, which had yet no touch of tenderness in it. 'You are come for this letter.' She snatched it from the drawer and held it before him. 'It is no use to lie to me; your face tells me the truth.'

William Henry's face was indeed white to the lips; his eyes returned her gaze with a confused and frightened stare. He stammered out something, he knew not what, and sank into a chair.

'What,' continued the girl, in harsh, pitiless tones, 'have you

nothing to say for yourself? Has your ready tongue no excuse to offer for your duplicity and falsehood?'

'Have you read the letter?' he inquired hoarsely.

'No; how could I?'

The colour rushed back to his cheeks, and into his eyes there came a gleam of hope.

'No,' she went on, 'it is you who shall read it to me. If you decline to do so, I shall conclude that this vile creature has written you what is not fit for anyone, save women like herself, to hear, and your refusal will be the last words that you will ever address to me with my consent, so help me Heaven.'

Mrs. Powell herself, when personating some heroine of the stage, never looked or spoke with greater earnestness of purpose than on this occasion did simple Margaret Slade out of the simplicity of her nature.

'I will read you the letter, Margaret,' was William Henry's quiet reply.

His words, and still more his tone, staggered Margaret not a little. The change in his face and manner within the last few minutes had indeed been most remarkable. At first he had seemed so struck with the consciousness of guilt, and so hopeless of forgiveness, that he had not dared to throw himself upon her mercy. Then he had appeared to recover himself a little; and now he was quite calm and composed, as though all apprehension had passed away from him.

His voice as he said 'I will read you the letter, Margaret,' had even a tender reproach in it, as though he, and not she, were the injured party.

'Read it,' she said; but her tone was no longer stubborn and imperious. It was plain that this woman's letter was not a love-letter, or he would not have consented to read it; and if it was not a love-letter, what cause had she for anger? And yet, if it was not so, why had he exhibited such confusion—nay despair?

'I will read it, since you wish it,' he went on, 'though it is a breach of confidence. It is better to break one's word than to break one's heart.'

The morality of this aphorism was somewhat questionable, but Margaret nodded assent. She took it, no doubt, in a particular sense. It was certainly better that she should know the worst than that any proviso of a designing woman, made for her own wicked convenience, should be respected.

'It is well to begin at the beginning,' continued William Henry. 'Be so good as to look at the address of that letter.'

She did so with an indifferent air. She could almost have said that she had seen it before, for she recognised it at once as one of those missives of which he had received so many of late.

'Let me draw your attention to the postmark.'

It was 'Mallow: Ireland.'

The letter fell from her hand. Self-humiliation mastered for the moment the happiness of discovering that he had not been false to her after all. It was certainly not with Mrs. Jordan that he was secretly corresponding, and probably with no one of her sex. If Margaret had been an older woman, with a larger experience of the ways of men, she might have regretted her misplaced indignation as 'waste;' it might have even struck her that the present mistake might weaken her position if on some future occasion she should have better reason for her reproaches, but she had no thought except for the injustice she had done her lover. She stood before him with downcast head, stupefied and penitent.

'Oh, Willie, I am so sorry.'

'So am I, dear; sorry that you should have so little confidence in me; sorry that you should have thought me capable of carrying on, under the roof that shelters you, an intrigue with another woman. This letter—and I have received others like it—is from Reginald Talbot.'

'But, Willie, what *could* I think?' she pleaded humbly, 'and why should you write to Mr. Talbot in cypher? And why, when I charged you falsely—with—what—you have mentioned—did you look so—so guilty?'

'Say rather so hurt and shocked, Margaret,' he answered gravely. 'It was surely only natural that I should be shocked at finding the girl I loved so distrustful of me.'

'I was wrong, oh, very, very wrong; and yet,' she pleaded, 'I erred through love of you, Willie. If I had not cared for you so much—so very much—I should not have been so unreasonable.'

'You mean so wild with jealousy,' he replied smiling. 'However, it's all over now,' and he held out his hand for the letter which she still retained.

'Please to read it to me,' she said; 'a few words will do.'

His face grew pale again, as she thought with anger.

'Why so?' he replied. 'Are you not satisfied even now?'

'Yes, yes; it was foolish of me, I know, but I said "So help me Heaven."'

'Oh, I see. For your oath's sake. That is what Herod said to the daughter of Herodias. It is not a good example to follow.'

He spoke stiffly, but she shook her head.

'I only ask for a few words, Willie.'

'But Talbot writes to me in confidence; about matters that only affect him and me. There is not a word that concerns you in it.'

Still she shook her head. The girl was truth itself, not only in the spirit, but in the letter. She had sworn not to speak with him unless he did a certain thing, and though the reason for his doing so no longer existed, her oath remained. Her stubbornness evidently annoyed him. Their parts in the little drama had as it were become reversed. The wrongdoer had become the injured person, and *vice versâ*.

'The facts are these,' he said slowly. 'Talbot and I, as you know, have a secret in common. He is the only person save myself, who has seen my patron. What he writes of him and our concerns—that is of the manuscripts—we do not wish others to see. We have therefore hit upon a device to keep our communications secret.'

He took out of the drawer a piece of cardboard exactly the shape and size of ordinary letter-paper, full of large holes neatly cut at unequal distances. He placed it on blank paper, and through the interstices wrote these words:

'Margaret has done you the honour to take your finnikin handwriting for that of Mrs. Jordan.'

Then he took off the cardboard and filled in the spaces with a number of inconsequent words, so that the whole communication became meaningless.

'Talbot has another piece of cardboard exactly similar to this,' he continued, 'and has only to place it over this rubbish for my meaning to become apparent.'

'It is very ingenious,' said Margaret. It was the highest praise she could afford. Such arts were distasteful to her. They seemed to suggest a natural turn for deception, and she secretly hoped that the invention lay at Talbot's door.

'Yes, I think the plan does me some credit,' said William Henry complacently. 'Well, I have only to lay the cardboard

over this letter that so excited your indignation, to get at the writer's meaning.'

Her eyes were turned towards him, but with no fixity of expression, she was bound to listen and to look, but her interest was gone.

'"Why do you not send me a copy of the play?"' he rapidly read. "One would think it was you only who had any stake in it;" and so on, and so on. 'I suppose you have no wish to pry further into our little secret,' he added, folding up the letter at the same time.

'I did not wish to pry into it at all, Willie,' she answered sorrowfully; 'I again repeat I am sorry to have mistrusted you.'

'Well, well, let us say no more about it. Let us forgive and forget.'

'It is you who have to forgive, Willie, not I.'

'I don't say that,' he answered gravely; 'but if you think so, keep your forgiveness, Maggie, for next time. Be sure I shall have need of it.'

Here the voice of Mr. Erin was heard calling for Margaret.

'Why do you not bring me the play?'

William Henry held up his finger in sign that she should not reveal his presence in the house to Mr. Erin, and taking the manuscript from a cupboard placed it in her hand.

'Take it him,' he whispered, with a tender kiss.

She kissed him again, without a word; the tears stood in her eyes, as, the very image of penitence and self-reproach, she made her mute adieu.

It was certainly an occasion on which some men, not unconscious of errors, might have congratulated themselves.

The expression of William Henry's face, however, was very far from one of triumph; it was white and worn and weary.

'Another such a victory,' he murmured with a haggard smile, 'and I shall be undone.'

He locked the door and threw himself into a chair with an exhausted air, like an actor who, having played his part successfully, is conscious of having done so with great effort, and also that he has owed more to good luck than to good guidance. 'Great Heaven!' he muttered, 'what an escape! Suppose she had found the key for herself and read the letter, or even if she had compelled me to do so. She must have heard it all. I could not have invented a syllable to save my life—— What a millstone is

this fellow about my neck,' he presently continued, as he tore the letter along and across, and threw the fragments under his feet. 'A copy of the play! No, that he shall never see till the time is past for harm to come of it. A few days more, and all will be safe. I will be pestered no longer with his cursed importunities.'

Then he took the perforated cardboard and tore that likewise into small pieces. 'Now I have burnt my boats with a vengeance,' he added grimly.

Then he rose and paced up and down the room, first rapidly, then slower and slower.

'I am afraid I have been hasty, after all,' he murmured; 'this Talbot is ill to deal with, and suspicious as the devil. If I tell him in what peril his communications have placed me, and that therefore I have destroyed his cypher, he will not believe me, though it is the truth. I must tell him that it has been destroyed by accident, and that therefore I dare not write him what he wishes, and that he will not believe either. If incredulity were genius, then indeed he would be a very clever fellow, but not otherwise. Great heavens! what rubbish he writes and calls it poetry. No, no, no,' he muttered with knitted brows, 'not *that*, Master Reginald, at any price. And yet how mad it will make him to find it is not so. He will do me a mischief if he can, no doubt. However, he will know nothing till it is too late. Next Saturday will put me out of the reach of harm. Would it were Saturday, and all were well. That's Shakespeare, by the bye, save that he says supper time. A bad augury—a bad augury. The Ides of March are come, but they have not yet gone.' Here he took another turn up and down the room. 'I wonder whether, with all his knowledge of humanity, Shakespeare ever knew a man who suffered like me. I wonder whether he sees me now, and knows about it. A strange thought indeed, and yet it may be so. Perhaps his great soul, which understands it all, has pity on me. Will *she* pity me? A still more momentous question. Pity is akin to love, he says, when love comes last. If love comes first, will pity follow it? What thoughts could I set down this moment were I in the mood for it; and yet they say I am no more a poet than this Talbot. He a poet! The vain drivelling fool; curse his false heart and prying eyes. I hate him.'

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PLAY.

THE first night of one new play is much the same as that of another, I suppose, all the world over. The opening and shutting of doors, the rustling of silks and satins, the murmur of expectancy, cannot hush the beating of the young author's breast, as he sits at the back of his box and longs, like the sick man, for the morning. Everybody who *is* anybody (a charming phrase indicating about one billionth of the human race) is there. Men of fashion and women of wit; gossips and critics; playwriters who have been damned and hope for company in their Inferno; playwriters who have succeeded, with no love for a new rival; the fast and the loose. Lights everywhere, but as much difficulty in finding places as though it were dark; mute recognitions, whispered information ('A dead failure, they tell me.' 'The best thing since the "School for Scandal"'); fashionable titters; consumption with her ill-bred cough. These are things peculiar to all first nights; but the first night of 'a newly discovered play by William Shakespeare' was, as one may imagine, something exceptional.

Malone, of course, had been at work. The public had been warned against 'an impudent imposture' in 'a Letter to Lord Charlemont' (surely the longest ever written) of which Edmund Burke had been so good as to say 'that he had got to the seventy-third page before he went to sleep.' It had been necessary to issue a counter-handbill and to distribute it at the doors.

'VORTIGERN.

'A malevolent and impudent attack on the Shakespeare Manuscript having appeared on the eve of representation of this play, evidently intended to injure the proprietor of the Manuscript, Mr. Erin feels it impossible, within the short space of time between the publishing and the representation, to produce an answer to Mr. Malone's most ill-founded assertions in his "Inquiry." He is therefore induced to request that "Vortigern and Rowena" may be heard with that candour which has ever distinguished a British audience.'

Opposition handbills were also in circulation, headed 'A Forgery.' The public interest in the play was unprecedented. The doors of Drury Lane were besieged. Within, the excitement was even more tremendous. The house was crammed to the very

roof. Many paid box prices though they knew no seats were to be attained there, for the purpose of getting down into the pit. 'The air was charged with the murmurs of the contending factions.' Nothing was ever heard or seen like it within the walls of a playhouse. In a centre box sat Samuel Erin and Margaret. The antiquary had thought it right that they should occupy a conspicuous position and show a bold front to the world, and she had consented to this arrangement without a murmur, for was it not for her Willie's sake? She looked very pale, however, and when addressed had hardly voice to answer. The vast assemblage in such commotion, the shouts and cries from the gallery, the satirical cries of 'Author! Author!'—though the overture had not commenced—appalled her.

In a small box on the opposite side of the house, sat alone a tall handsome man, as pale as she. He had drawn the little curtain forward, so as to conceal himself from the occupants of the house, and kept his face, which wore a look of great distress, turned towards the stage. Through the folds of the curtain he had stolen one glance at her as she took her seat; but afterwards he had looked no more at her. In the next compartment was another and younger man, who also seemed to have a personal interest in Margaret Slade. His box was full of spectators, but he sat at the back of them and, unseen by her, fixed his eyes upon her from time to time with a searching expression. When the play began, however, he listened to it with the most rapt attention—not a word escaped him—and with every word his face grew darker and more malevolent.

Behind the curtain opinion was almost as much divided as before it. Kemble was in his grimmest humour; disinclined, as many said, both then and afterwards, to give his Vortigern fair play. Some of the inferior actors, taking their tune from him, certainly abstained from exerting themselves, and even made no secret beforehand of their design to abstain. It was a play cumbrous in construction, and even in the very names of the dramatis personæ, such as Wortimerus and Catagrinus; but it had been accepted by the management, and the company, as it was afterwards urged, and with justice, should have done their best for it. Mrs. Powell and Mrs. Jordan vied with one another in encouraging William Henry, who remained all the evening behind the scenes. The former made a magnificent Edmunda; the latter, of whom the greatest of our dramatic critics writes, 'Delightful

Mrs. Jordan, whose voice did away with the cares of the whole house before they saw her come in,' surpassed herself. If beauty and vivacity could have saved the piece, she would have saved it, single-handed. There was a great deal of opposition, but at first the play went fairly well. The swell and roll of its sonorous lines hid their lack of ideas, and in a fashion supported themselves unaided.

'We are safe now; the "Vortigern" will succeed, Henry,' said Mrs. Jordan cheerfully, as she left the stage at the close of the second act.

William Henry did not answer; his face, pale and haggard as it had been throughout the evening, had suddenly assumed a look of horror.

'What is the matter with you, lad?' exclaimed Mrs. Powell. 'You would make a good actor, but a very bad author; you could not look more desponding if the play was your own. It is going all right; you must not mind a hiss or two.'

'I fear him,' whispered William Henry, hoarsely. 'That is his hateful voice; it is all over.'

The two ladies looked at one another significantly; they had seen young fathers of promising plays on first nights before, but here was a mere godfather worse than any of them. They thought that the young fellow had taken leave of his wits.

'I tell you it is all over,' continued the wretched youth; 'he has come here to damn me.'

'If you mean the Devil, that is nothing new,' said Mrs. Powell; 'he is always, so we are told, in the playhouse.'

She spoke very sharply; she thought it the right remedy to apply under the circumstances, just as she might have recommended bending back the fingers in an extreme case of hysterics.

'Come here,' said Mrs. Jordan, leading the young man to a spot where, through a chink in the curtain, they could get a view of the box where his father and cousin sat. 'Look at your Margaret yonder; she is not a coward like you.' Indeed, the more the people hissed, the calmer and the more indifferent Margaret seemed to be, though under that unmoved exterior she suffered agonies. She was thinking of her Willie, though she could not see him, and love enhanced her beauty.

It was a frightful scene of turmoil, though up till now a good-natured one. The actor who had last left the stage (or rather who was left upon it, for he had been killed in combat) had had, by

some mismanagement, the curtain dropped upon his legs, and had jumped up and rubbed them before the audience in a manner very unbecoming a corpse. At this they had screamed with laughter, to which his Highness the Duke of Clarence, in the royal box, contributed his full share. Their good humour was, therefore, for the present, assured, though such mirth was hardly conducive to the success of a tragedy. But at the commencement of the next act there were signs of ill-nature. There were cries set agoing from a box on the upper tier, of 'Forgery! forgery!' and even of 'Thief Erin! Thief Erin! look at Thief Erin!'

Kemble's magnificent voice alone could make itself heard above these sounds of displeasure. He was apostrophising the King of Terrors:—

> Oh sovereign Death,
> Who hast for thy domain this world immense.
> Churchyards and charnel-houses are thy haunts,
> And hospitals thy sumptuous palaces;
> And when thou wouldst be merry thou dost choose
> The gaudy chamber of a dying king.
> And then thou dost ope wide thy monstrous jaws,
> And with rude laughter and fantastic tricks
> Thou clapp'st thy rattling fingers to thy side;
> And when this solemn mockery is o'er——

Here he was suffered to proceed no further; that unfortunate line, uttered in the most sepulchral tone, was the signal for the most discordant howl that was ever heard within the walls of a theatre. He repeated the line with his own peculiar emphasis, and even, as a spectator tells us, 'with a solemn grimace.' It was the death-blow of the piece. A scene of confusion ensued which beggars description. Suddenly, and as the newspapers of the day said, 'without any premonition,' a rush was made for the box occupied by the Erins. Fortunately, however, one man at least had premonition of it. He was the one who has been mentioned as occupying a box by himself. He had been silent all the evening, taking no part either with the partisans or the opponents of the play, but with eyes ever attentive to what was going on. The voice of the young fellow in the next compartment had attracted him above all others; it had malevolence in it which was wanting in the other cases, and, though he did not recognise it, sounded not unfamiliar to him. It had been the first to raise the cry of 'Forger!' and the only one which had mentioned the name of Erin. As he repeated the words for the

third or fourth time, some drunken fellow hiccuped 'Where are they?' To which the malevolent voice replied, 'I'll show you. The young scoundrel is hiding behind the curtain, but we'll have him out.'

The next moment the corridor was full of an excited rabble, led by Reginald Talbot. They ran in their stupid fury at full speed, but not so fast as Frank Dennis would have run could he have got free of them. He had dashed from his box the instant he had heard Talbot's vengeful cry, but it had already raised the wilder spirits of the house, and they had rushed out from this door and that, and interposed themselves between him and their

leader. He beheld already Margaret surrounded by this wild and wanton crew, the old man maltreated, and William Henry, evidently the object of this fellow's hatred, torn to pieces. He ran with the impetuous crowd, parting them like water left and right with his broad shoulders, till he gained a place among the foremost. Talbot, leading by a few paces, had reached a spot where two staircases met: the one a narrow one, leading straight down to a few boxes, in one of which Margaret was seated, the other a broader flight, which led to one of the exits of the house. Talbot, wild with haste and rage, cast a glance behind him to point out to his followers the right direction to take, when he met Dennis' eye, and strove to turn and speak. But ere he could do so, Frank's strong fingers were on his neck, and impelled him forward, like the wind, to the top of the broader stair. The others, who knew not what had happened, thought that they were still following their leader to their destination, and ran on full pelt behind them. Ere the third step was reached, half a dozen had fallen headlong, and half a score came toppling over these. Oaths and groans mingled with the cries of those who still pushed on behind, but Reginald Talbot neither spoke nor fell. The fingers that had closed about his neck clutched his throat also, while at the same time they kept him up, though his legs used a speed which they had never before attained to; they took their four and even five steps at a time. Fortunately for him, and perhaps for his custodian also, the great door at the foot of the staircase was open to the street, and when they reached it Frank simply let his companion go, who, bereft of sense, though by no means of motion, fell face foremost, with the most frightful violence, into a mud-heap. A friendly pillar brought Dennis himself to anchorage, who then quietly turned and entered the theatre by another way.

Thanks to his presence of mind and strength of body, the house was now freed of its more dangerous elements, and an attempt was being made to finish the play, though almost in dumb show. Mrs. Jordan, though greatly agitated, had even the courage to speak the epilogue, and for the first time found her graces and witcheries of no avail. Margaret would have stayed to say a few words of love and confidence to William Henry, but Mr. Erin hurried her away.

'It was a planned thing,' he kept murmuring on the way home in the hackney-coach. 'There was a plot to damn the play; that devil Malone was at the bottom of it.'

But Margaret was not thinking of Malone, nor even of the play, concerning which, though she heard them not, there were reports, besides its failure, of misadventure and even death. She was thinking of Willie, and why he did not come home to be comforted. The two sat down alone to supper, of which neither could touch a mouthful; the antiquary full of woeful thoughts, the girl with only one question in her mind, 'Why does he not come?'

The maid thought she had seen him at the door when her mistress got out of the carriage; there was certainly some young man with his hat pulled over his eyes, who had watched her into the house, and having, as it seemed, assured himself of her safety, had walked away. It was possible of course that this might have been Willie, but whither had he gone?

'It is no use your waiting for William Henry,' said the antiquary roughly; 'why don't you eat?'

She noticed that her uncle no longer spoke of 'Samuel,' and the change jarred upon her feelings, already strained and tried. It was no fault of Willie's that the play had not succeeded, and it was cruel to visit such a misfortune upon his innocent head.

'It is only natural that I should be anxious about him,' she returned with some touch of resentment.

'Pooh, pooh! why should you be anxious? He is no doubt supping with one of the players.'

His indifferent words struck her like a blow at random. Was it conceivable, after what had happened that evening, that Willie should prefer the society of another to her own. Above all, was it possible that that one should be Mrs. Jordan? She could not but notice how Flavia had fought for the play, and had hardly known whether to admire or detest her for it. If she had been in her place, and could have done it, she would have fought for it too, but then she would have had an adequate motive. Why should that woman have dared so much for it when the others had performed their parts in so sluggish and perfunctory a manner? It must have been because she had her heart in it. And who could have their heart in a mere stage-play, a thing at the best full of fictitious woes and imaginary heroes? There must have been human love —or what such creatures took for love—to have enlisted her in its cause. Oh, why did not Willie come?

As the night wore on apprehensions for her lover's personal safety took the place of these jealous fears. What might not despair and disappointment have induced him to do? In her

wretchedness and need of sympathy and consolation, she ventured to hint at this to Mr. Erin.

'It is surely very odd, uncle. Willie ought to be home by this time at all events. Should we not send somewhere?'

'What nonsense! Whither should we send, and why? The lad is old enough to take care of himself.'

'But perhaps in his dejection and—and—misery, uncle, he might not have any care of himself.'

'Tush! he is not of that sort. He has much too high an opinion of his own value to throw himself away—into the river, for instance. That such an idea should have entered your mind, however, shows what an unstable fellow you think him; and in some ways—though not in that way—he *is* unstable. He is but a boy, after all, and a spoilt boy. I take blame to myself that I suffered him to entertain the delusion that he was fit to take to himself a wife. It was conditional indeed upon certain contingencies which have not taken place, so that the whole affair is null and void.'

'Uncle!' Margaret rose from her chair, and with white face and flashing eyes confronted the old man.

'Of course it's null and void,' he went on, flattening the tobacco in his pipe with its stopper, and affecting an indifferent air. 'A bargain's a bargain, though indeed, as I have said, it is one that I should never have entered into in any case, but the mere vulgar question of ways and means now puts an end to the matter. Of course he looked for material results from the "Vortigern." It will now not keep the stage another night, while the publication of the play is rendered worthless. It is not his fault, of course; I don't blame him. It is not in mortals to command success. There is nothing for him now but to return to the conveyancing business; and in ten years or so there is no knowing but that he may step into old Bingley's shoes.'

'And I?' cried Margaret bitterly. 'What am I to do? To wait for him?'

'Certainly not; that would be hopeless indeed. The best thing you can possibly do just at present is to—I shall make arrangements for his lodging elsewhere out of harm's way—is to begin to forget all about him.'

'Forget him—forget Willie? How can I?'

'By thinking of somebody else,' returned the antiquary coolly; 'that I have heard is the best way. At all events it will have to be done.'

'Do you think then a woman's heart is like a seal, uncle, on which an image is impressed, and which, held to some fierce flame—as mine seems to be, Heaven help me, this moment—it straightway becomes a blank ready for the reception of another image? Oh, no, no, I will wait ten years for Willie, if it be necessary, but I will never forget him.'

'He'll forget *you* in half the time,' was the dry rejoinder.

'You speak falsely as well as cruelly, uncle,' said Margaret passionately.

There had been a time when even passion could not have nerved her to speak so boldly to the antiquary; and there had been a time when if she had dared to do so the old man would have put down his foot upon such passion and crunched the sparks out. But just now Margaret was too full of her misery and the sense of wrong to care what she said, while her uncle, on his part, though he was fully resolved to put an end to his niece's engagement with William Henry, could not at once resume the relative position to her he had occupied before it was mooted.

'As to my speaking falsely concerning William Henry's fidelity,' he answered quietly, 'time alone can prove that: and there will be certainly plenty of time; while as to cruelty I really cannot accuse myself of having been cruel.'

'What! when you have allowed the mutual love between your son and me for months to ripen without censure? When you have heard him call me his own ten times a day, and never reproved him for it? When you have thrown us together and left us together? And now because something has not succeeded, of the success of which you made sure, do you wish to tear us asunder and bid us forget one another? And then, oh shame, do you dare to say you are not cruel?'

The old man made her no reply; perhaps his conscience pricked him in the matter, or perhaps he perceived that it was useless to argue with her in her present excited state.

'Have you any fault to find with Willie?' she continued reproachfully. 'Has he not done all he could do in this unfortunate affair? What has happened to the "Vortigern" that he could help or hinder? Do you suppose he has deceived you because it has not succeeded?'

'Of course not,' put in the antiquary testily; 'the boy is honest enough no doubt; but one must look at things from a

reasonable point of view. Come, come, we can talk of these things to-morrow. It is getting late. Let us to bed.'

She answered not a word, but sat with her face bowed down on the table and hidden in her hands, while he took up his candle and left her. She remained in the same position for many minutes, when suddenly there came a gentle knock, a mere tap, at the front door. She was on her feet in a moment, with her long hair loose behind her ears, listening. It was not Willie's knock, she knew, but it might be news of Willie. The clock on the mantelpiece had just struck two. Then came the tap again; this time a little more distinct. It was evident that her uncle had not heard it, and the servant had long gone to bed. There were many bad characters abroad in the street in those times, restrained by a very inefficient constabulary, but Margaret did not hesitate to obey this second summons. She went to the door and undid the fastenings without making the least noise.

A woman stood on the step, to judge by her figure a young one, but her face was hidden in her hood.

'You are Margaret?' she said, in clear sweet tones mingled with an ineffable pity.

'I am,' she answered, with a dreadful fear at her heart. She felt that some messenger of evil tidings stood before her.

'I thought so; I felt sure that you would be sitting up for him,' murmured the other softly.

'Where is he? Is he ill? Why does he not come home?' gasped Margaret.

'He is not ill, but he cannot come home. Let me in, and I will tell you all.'

With a gentle pressure, for Margaret's instinct was to oppose her, the visitor made her way into the house. 'Let me see you quite alone,' she said; 'somewhere where we cannot be interrupted. I have news for your private ear—I am sorry to say, bad news.'

'And who are you?' Margaret's voice was antagonistic, almost defiant. She resented this woman's coming beyond all measure, but the fear within her compelled her to listen to what she might have to say.

'I am Mrs Jordan,' was the quiet reply.

(*To be concluded.*)